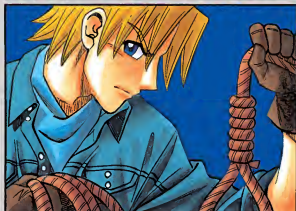
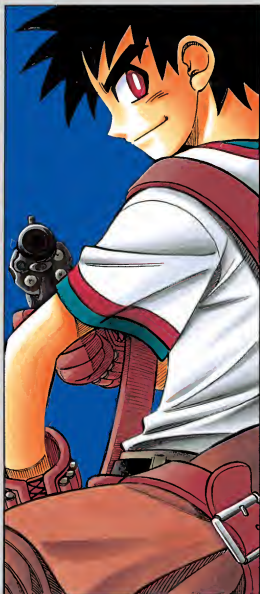
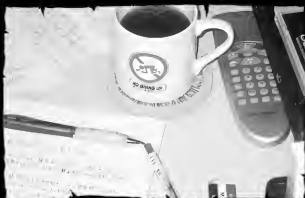


GUN BLAZE WEST

ガン・ブレイズ・ウエスト



3 SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED
Story & Art by
NOBUHIRO WATSUKI



The series concluded after 28 chapters and a total of three volumes over a period of about half a year. It was a short run, but I learned many things from the experience. Just as this work was born from my previous work, Rurouni Kenshin, I am growing steadily as an artist as I await the birth of a new creation. Next time, I will do my very best to fully apply what I have learned in order to nurture a creation that will grow strong. To all you readers who supported me:

Thank you so much!

—NOBUHIRO WATSUKI, 2001

Nobuhiro Watsuki earned international accolades for his first major manga series, *Rurouni Kenshin*, about a wandering swordsman in Meiji Era Japan. Serialized in Japan's *Weekly Shonen Jump* from 1994 to 1999, *Rurouni Kenshin* quickly became a worldwide sensation, inspiring a spin-off short story ("Yahiko no Sakabato"), an animated TV series, and several animated movies. Watsuki's latest series, *Buso Renkin*, also available in English from VIZ Media, began publication in *Weekly Shonen Jump* in June 2003.

GUN BLAZE WEST VOL.3

The SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED Manga Edition

STORY AND ART BY
NOBUHIRO WATSUKI



Translation JN Productions
Touch-up Art & Lettering HudsonYards
Design Courtney Utt
Editor Ian Robertson

Editor in Chief, Books Alvin Lu
Editor in Chief, Magazines Marc Weidenbaum
VP, Publishing Licensing Rika Inouye
VP, Sales & Product Marketing Gonzalo Ferreyra
VP, Creative Linda Espinosa
Publisher Hyoe Narita

GUN BLAZE WEST © 2000 by Nobuhiro Watsuki. All rights reserved.
First published in Japan in 2000 by SHUEISHA Inc., Tokyo. English
translation rights arranged by SHUEISHA Inc. The stories, characters
and incidents mentioned in this publication are entirely fictional.

No portion of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by
any means without written permission from the copyright holders.

Printed in the U.S.A.

Published by VIZ Media, LLC
P.O. Box 77010
San Francisco, CA 94107

SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED Manga Edition
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
First printing, October 2008



www.viz.com

THE WORLD'S MOST
CUTTING-EDGE MANGA

SHONEN
JUMP
ADVANCED

www.shonenjump.com

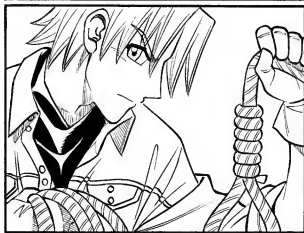
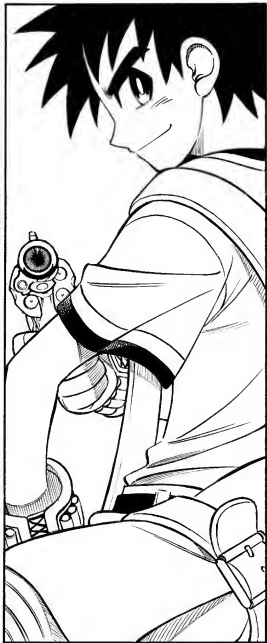


PARENTAL ADVISORY

GUN BLAZE WEST is rated T+ for Older Teen
and is recommended for ages 16 and up.

This volume contains violence.

ratings.viz.com



WAITING FOR YOU AT THE PLACE WE DREAMT OF

GUN BLAZE WEST

ガン・ブレイズ・ウェスト

STORY & ART BY
NOBUHIRO WATSUKI



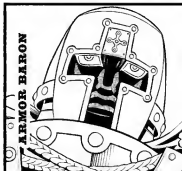
MARCUS HOMER



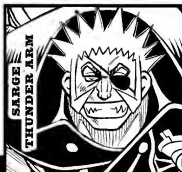
ROBERT RODRIGUEZ



J.J.



ARMOR BARON



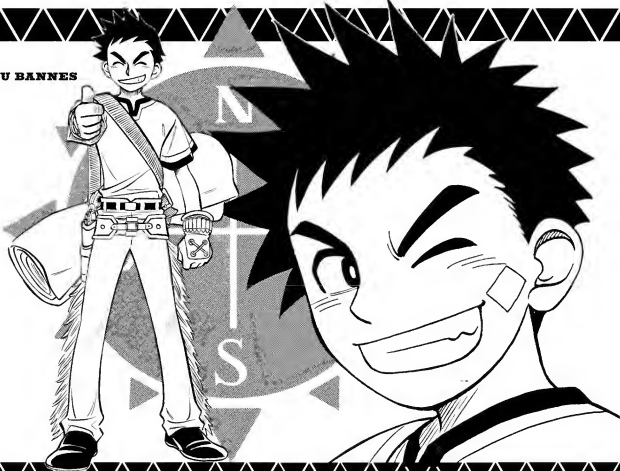
SARGE THUNDER ARM

America in the 19th century. Viu, a young boy who dreams of becoming a gunslinger, lives in Winston Town, Illinois, with his older sister Cissy. One day, Viu meets Marcus Homer, a gunslinger who scurried away from the West. With Marcus's help, Viu stands up to two outlaws and manages to apprehend them despite getting badly beaten up. When Viu tells Marcus, "I want to become stronger," Marcus makes up his mind to resume his quest for "Gun Blaze West," a promised land he once dreamt of—a place where only the strong who are confident of their skills are allowed to set foot. The two vow to join together and head toward their goal. When it is learned that the outlaws were scouts for the heinous Kenbrown Gang, the town prepares for attack. Viu and Marcus face the gang and Marcus falls to a bullet from the cowardly Kenbrown's gun. Marcus entrusts his gun to Viu, who takes on the gang without giving an inch, finally managing to gun down Kenbrown. Marcus falls into the river, but it is unknown whether he is dead or alive.

Five years later, Viu, now 14, heads west. He starts by visiting the city of St. Louis, the "Gateway to the West," where he meets up with Carol and Will Johnston. Will is a master of ropes and harbors the same deep desire to go to the land known as... Gun Blaze West.

Later, the two boys collapse out in the wilderness, where they are rescued by a small circus troupe. The ringmaster, Rodriguez, a former outlaw called the "Western Phantom," gave up his own quest for Gun Blaze West 20 years ago. He begins Viu's training to attain Concentration One, the ability to take control of an instant in time. Rodriguez's former partner Gualarippa appears, accompanied by his twin sons, and invites Rodriguez to resume their quest for Gun Blaze West together.

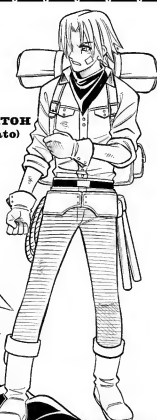
VIU BANNES



WILL JOHNSTON



COLICE SATOH
(Koritsu Sato)





C O N T E N T S

WAITING FOR YOU AT THE PLACE WE DREAMT OF

CHAPTER 19: FORT SMITH	7
CHAPTER 20: MILK	25
CHAPTER 21: POINT	45
CHAPTER 22: DOUBLE MONSTER	65
CHAPTER 23: SUPER SOLDIER	85
CHAPTER 24: HUMAN BULLET	105
CHAPTER 25: OUT OF SAFETY	125
CHAPTER 26: GATHERING	145
CHAPTER 27: FIGHTING HIGH	164
CHAPTER 28: (FINAL CHAPTER) WAITING FOR YOU AT THE PLACE WE DREAMT OF.	183

CHAPTER 19: FORT SMITH

THAT'S THE
POINT THIS
TIME.

RIGHT
NEARBY,
THERE'S AN
OLD MINING
GHOST TOWN.

FORT
SMITH,
ARKANSAS.



...BUT EVEN
NOW, I HEAR
INFORMATION
FROM UNDER-
GROUND
SOURCES
WHETHER
I WANT TO
OR NOT.

MAYBE
IT'S MY OLD
REPUTATION...

COLICE
TOLD ME.

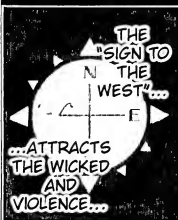
I HEARD YOU
ACQUIRED
CONCENTRATION
ONE JUST IN
THE NICK OF
TIME...

RING-
MASTER
!!



...THEN
YOU'RE THE
EMBODIMENT
OF THE WICK-
EDNESS AND
VIOLENCE YOU
LECTURED ME
ABOUT!

IF YOU'RE
GOING TO
SOLVE
THINGS BY
KILLING
HIM...



THAT'S HOW
I'M GOING
TO SETTLE
IT!!

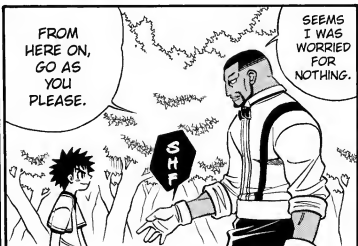
THE REAL
SOLUTION IS
WHO GETS TO
GUN BLAZE
WEST FIRST!!



THIS BOY WILL NEVER LET
WICKEDNESS AND VIOLENCE
GET THE BETTER OF HIM...



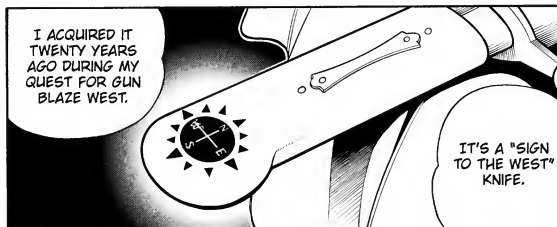
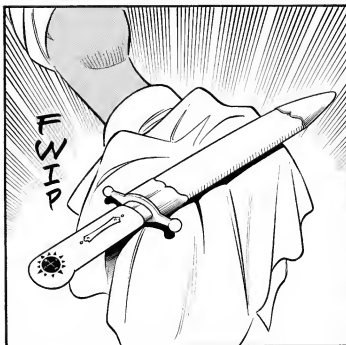
I WILL!!

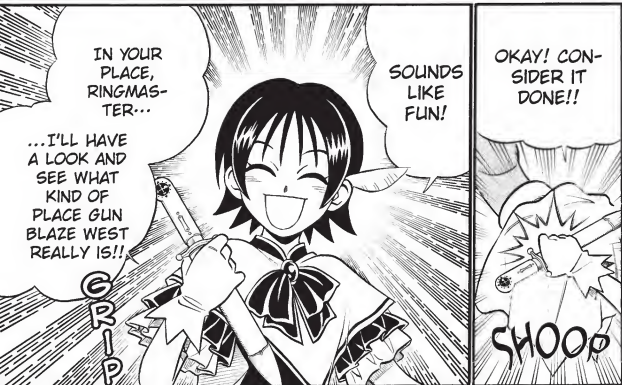


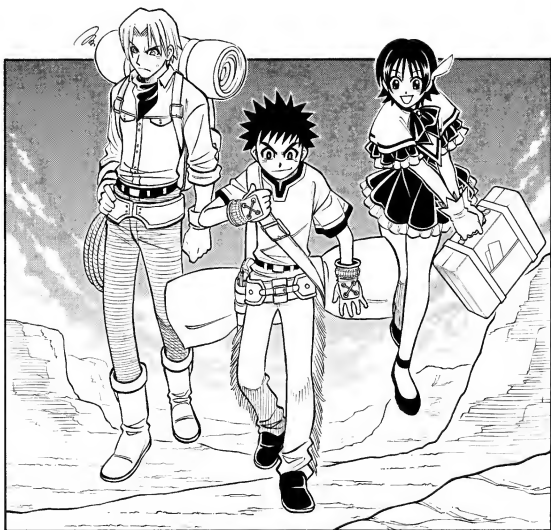
FROM
HERE ON,
GO AS
YOU
PLEASE.

SEEMS
I WAS
WORRIED
FOR
NOTHING.

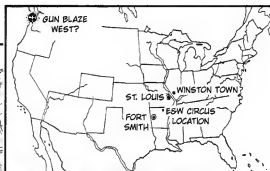








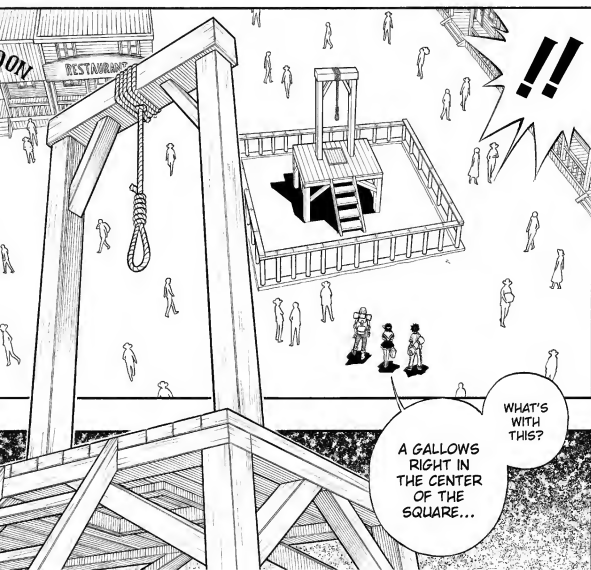
CHAPTER 19: FORT SMITH

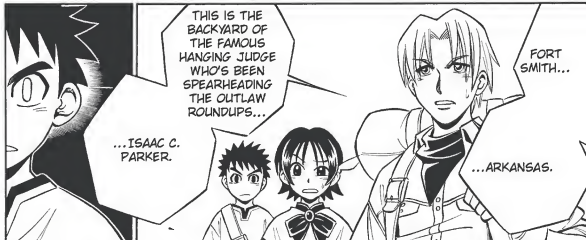


WE'RE
HERE!!

FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS

◀ READ THIS WAY ▶





THIS IS THE
BACKYARD OF
THE FAMOUS
HANGING JUDGE
WHO'S BEEN
SPEARHEADING
THE OUTLAW
ROUNDUPS...

...ISAAC C.
PARKER.

FORT
SMITH...

...ARKANSAS.



...FIVE
YEARS
AGO...

I ESCAPED THE
OUTLAW
ROUNDUPS...

I
SEE...



IS THAT WHY
THERE'S A
GALLONS
IN THE
SQUARE?

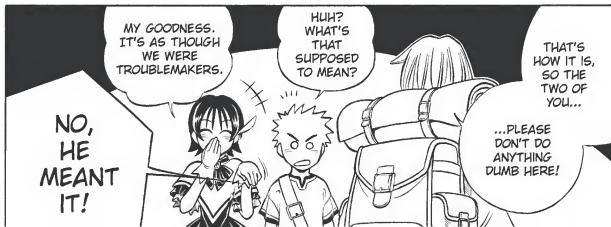
UH...
THAT'S
KIND OF
SCARY...

THERE'VE
BEEN SO
MANY HANG-
INGS OF
CAPTURED
OUTLAWS...
...THAT IT'S
BECOME
A SORT OF
A TOURIST
ATTRACTION.



THE SLIGHTEST
SUSPICIOUS
ACTIVITY WILL
GET YOU SENT
IMMEDIATELY
TO JAIL.

THERE'S NO
SHORTAGE
OF SHERIFFS
EITHER.



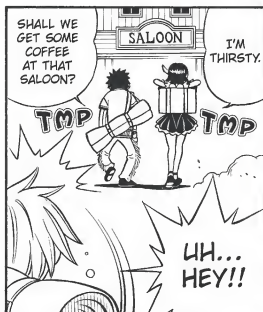
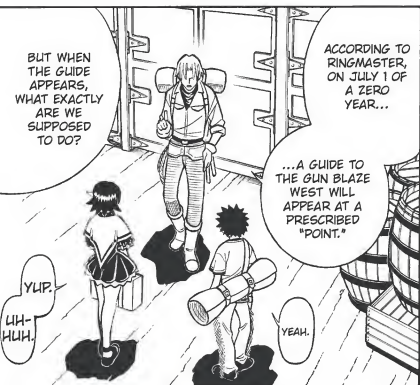
MY GOODNESS.
IT'S AS THOUGH
WE WERE
TROUBLEMAKERS.

HUH?
WHAT'S
THAT
SUPPOSED
TO MEAN?

THAT'S
HOW IT IS,
SO THE
TWO OF
YOU...

NO,
HE
MEANT
IT!

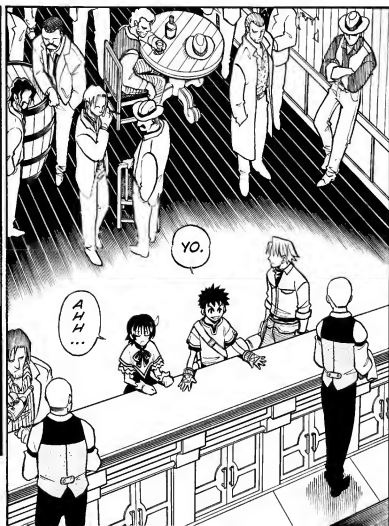
...PLEASE
DON'T DO
ANYTHING
DUMB HERE!



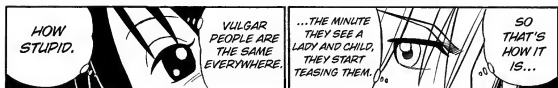


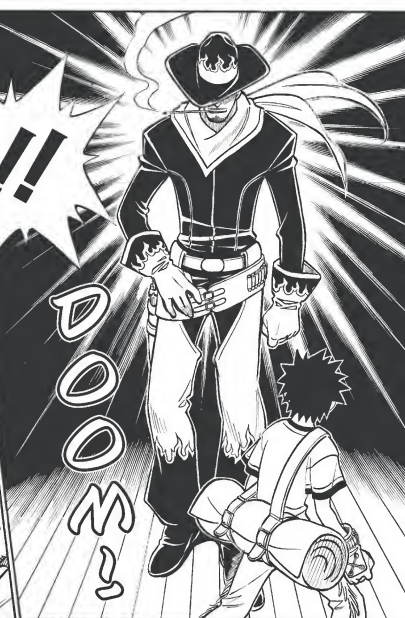
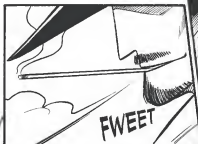


NORMALLY, THERE'S NO WAY THERE SHOULD BE THIS MANY OUTLAWS GATHERING HERE.





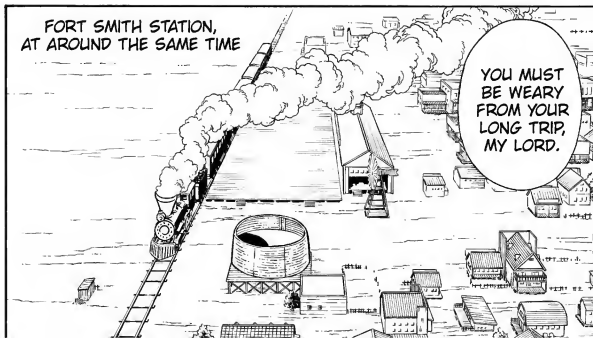


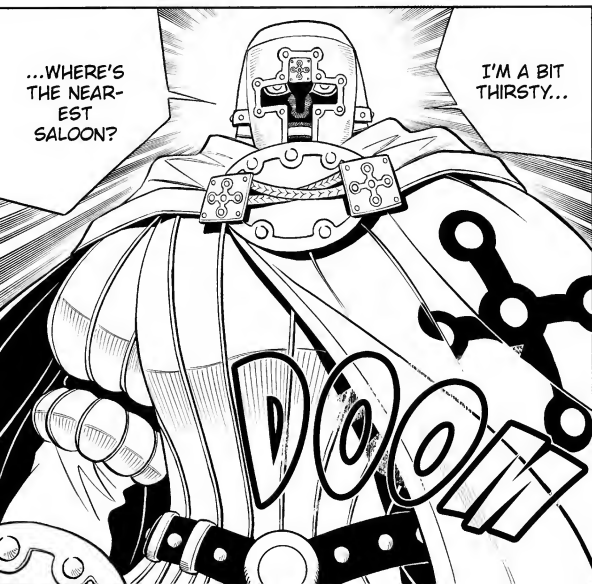


GIVE ME
A GLASS
OF MILK.

HEY,
BAR-
TENDER.







A "3 VS. 3 GROUP BATTLE" WAS MY INITIAL CONCEPT AS I DREW GUALARIPPA AND HIS SONS. BUT AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THE FINISHED STORY, THERE WASN'T MUCH OF A GROUP BATTLE AT ALL. ON THE CONTRARY, IT'S NOT EVEN 3 VS. 3. (THE CONFLICT BETWEEN GUALARIPPA AND RODRIGEZ WAS NOT A FIGHT; IT SERVED AS THE CLOSING SCENE.)

THIS WAS AT A TIME WHEN I STRUGGLED TO MAKE THE STORY WORK AFTER JUST RECOVERING FROM THE WORST CONDITION BOTH MY MIND AND BODY HAD EVER BEEN IN. DURING DISCUSSIONS WITH MY EDITOR, I TRIED VARIOUS IDEAS, EVEN SUGGESTING, "UNO AND DOS ARE ACTUALLY TRIPLETS. SHALL I BRING OUT ANOTHER CHARACTER?" IT WAS A REAL MESS.

IMAGE SOURCE: MEXICANS—ONE OF THE ELEMENTS A WESTERN CANNOT DO WITHOUT.

CHARACTER FILE #09



UNO, DOS & GUALARIPPA

DESIGN: WHEN YOU THINK OF MEXICANS, YOU THINK OF THE HAT AND PONCHO, SO I DIDN'T THINK TOO DEEPLY BEYOND THAT. IT WAS A DESIGN I CAME UP WITH PRETTY MUCH RIGHT AWAY.

ALSO, IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THE ELEMENT OF OUTRAGEOUSNESS, I SET THEM UP WITH WEAPONS LIKE THE IRON SHIELD PISTOL THAT WERE CHARACTERIZED BY THEIR CIRCULAR SHAPE.

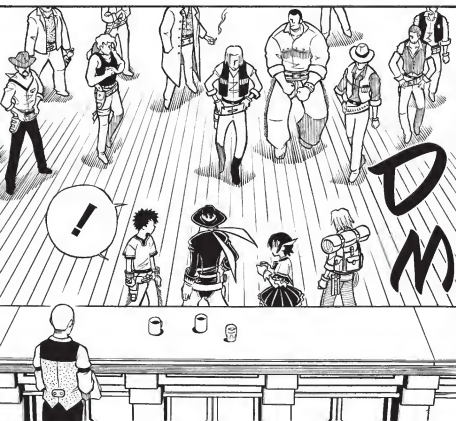
ALTHOUGH I WAS FRANKLY UNABLE TO PUT TOO MUCH THOUGHT INTO GUALARIPPA AND HIS SONS, I ENJOYED DRAWING THEIR OUTRAGEOUS WEAPONS.

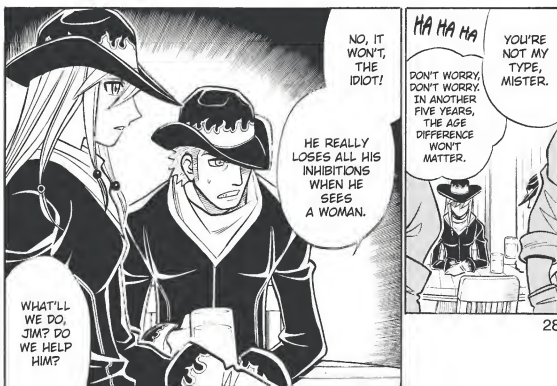
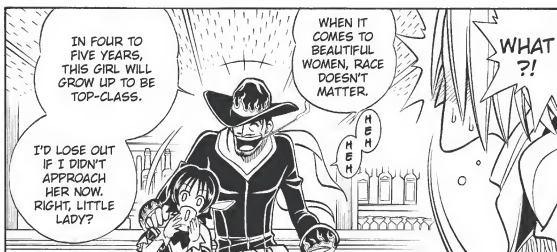
ON A SIDE NOTE, I WAS ONCE AGAIN STRUCK BY THE THOUGHT, "AHH, I REALLY DO LIKE TO USE OUTRAGEOUS ELEMENTS."

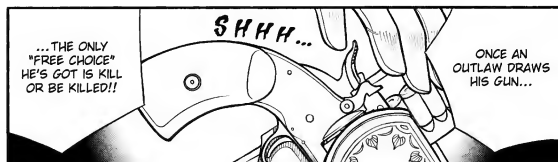
CHAPTER 20: MILK

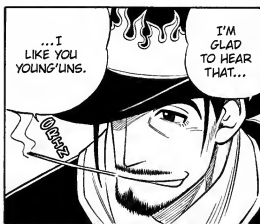








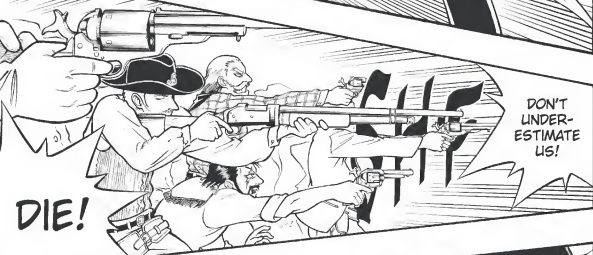




BUT IT'S
DANGEROUS,
SO STAND
BACK!

I APPRE-
CIATE THE
THOUGHT!

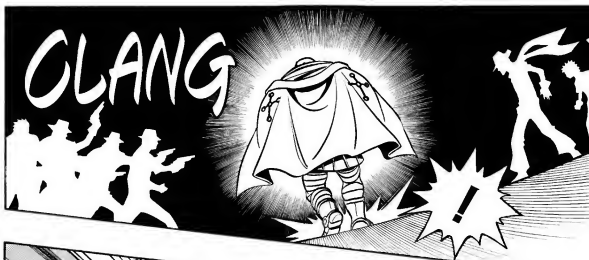
HA F



DON'T
UNDER-
ESTIMATE
US!

DIE!



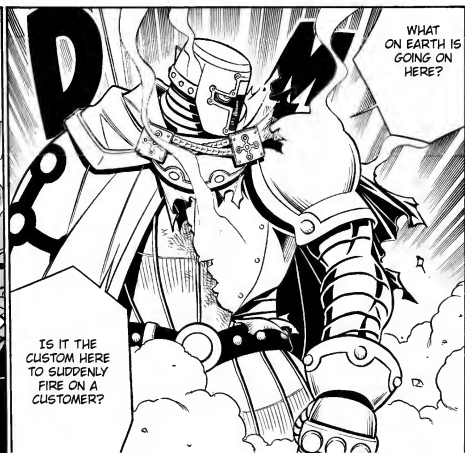




CLANG

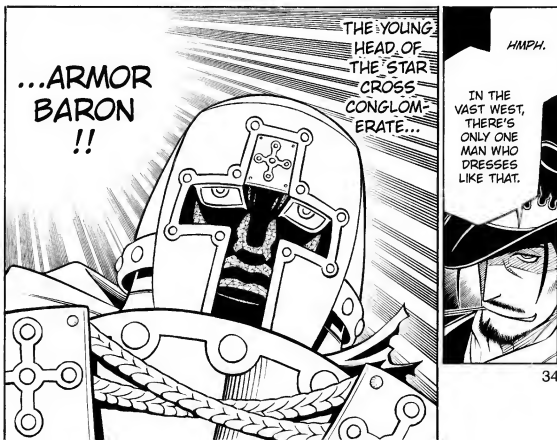


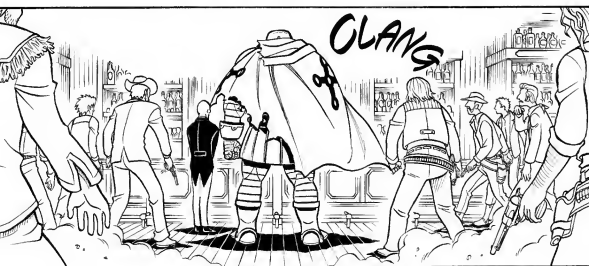
AN ODD
SHOP.

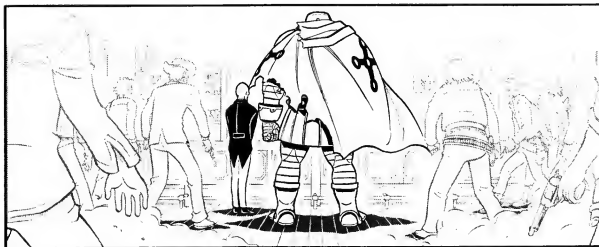
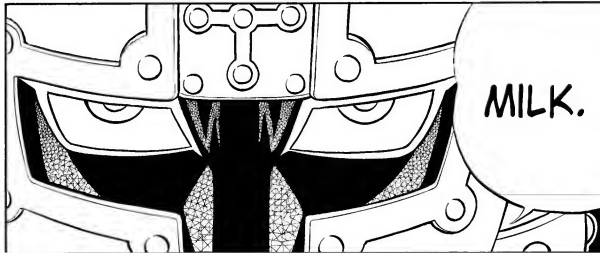


WHAT
ON EARTH IS
GOING ON
HERE?

IS IT THE
CUSTOM HERE
TO SUDDENLY
FIRE ON A
CUSTOMER?







IT WOULDN'T BE ANY FUN IF YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY AND HAD TO RETIRE FROM THE COMPETITION BECAUSE OF A SILLY FIGHT.

IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN BEHAVE YOURSELVES AND WAIT FOR THREE DAYS.

SINCE YOU'RE ALL HERE, YOU MUST ALL BE SEEKING GUN BLAZE WEST.

...SEEMS THERE WAS QUITE A COMMOTION A MINUTE AGO.

F
W
A
P

DELICIOUS!

YIKES

...BUT TO USE EACH OF YOUR WEAPONS TO THEIR FULLEST EXTENT!

CLANG

CLANG

AFTER THREE DAYS, YOU WON'T HAVE ANY CHOICE...

OH MAN!

...WHEW.

CLANG

HUH?

UH-OH!

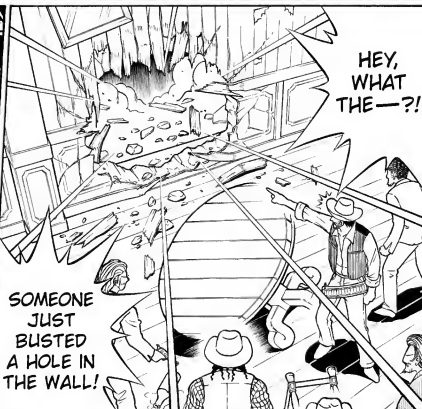
HUH?

OKAY, MISTER, WHERE WERE WE?

HE'S TRYING TO SCARE US.

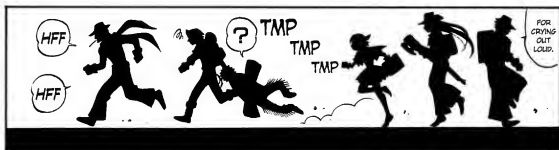
...UH HEH HEH...

GETTING IN MY WAY LIKE THAT.



HEY,
WHAT
THE—?!

SOMEONE
JUST
BUSTED
A HOLE IN
THE WALL!

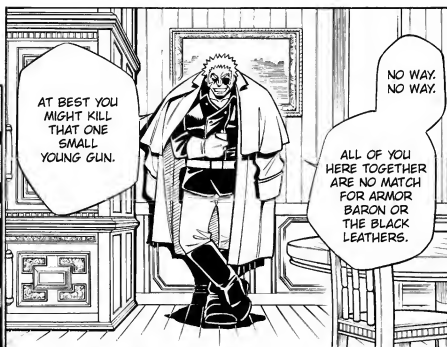


HEH
HEH
HEH





HEH
HEH
HEH
...



AT BEST YOU
MIGHT KILL
THAT ONE
SMALL
YOUNG GUN.

NO WAY.
NO WAY.

ALL OF YOU
HERE TOGETHER
ARE NO MATCH
FOR ARMOR
BARON OR
THE BLACK
LEATHERS.



YOU ALL HAVE
DISSATISFIED
LOOKS ON
YOUR FACES.

HEY,
COME ON,
WHAT'S THE
MATTER?

LILY-
LIVERS.

SHALL I
TAKE THEM
ON IN YOUR
PLACE?

SHIRK



SURE!
I'LL
COME!

WAIT A
MINUTE!

IF YOU
HAVEN'T
DECIDED
ON WHERE
YOU'RE
STAYING
YET...

...WHY
DON'T YOU
COME
WITH US?

NOW,
THEN
...

...WE'RE
GOING BACK
TO OUR
HOTEL NOW.
WHAT ABOUT
YOU?

WE DON'T KNOW
WHETHER THESE FOLKS
WILL BE OUR ENEMIES
OR OUR FRIENDS THREE
DAYS FROM NOW!

IDIOT. STOP
WITH THE
KNEE-JERK
ANSWER!

WHAT?

WE'LL
CONSIDER
THEM
FRIENDS
UNTIL THREE
DAYS FROM
NOW!!

THEN WHY
NOT!



...A CLUE OR HINT. I WANT—

YOU PEOPLE ARE SEEKING GUN BLAZE WEST, TOO, SO YOU MUST HAVE...



ALL OF YOU HAVE
BEEN FORCED TO
RETIRE FROM
THE SEARCH
RIGHT HERE.



HEH HEH HEH...
DON'T TAKE
IT BADLY,
COWARDS.

ME,
SARGE
THUNDER
ARM.

DN

I DON'T NEED
ANYONE ELSE!
THE ONLY ONE
WHO IS GOING
TO REACH GUN
BLAZE WEST
IS ME!



CONCEPT: FOR SOME REASON, RODRIGEZ WAS A CHARACTER THAT DEMANDED AN AWFUL LOT: HE HAD TO SUGGEST THE NEXT STEP TO GUN BLAZE WEST WHILE PLAYING A ROLE IN MAKING VIU STRONGER, AND REPRIMANDING VIU, WHO HAD BECOME TOO EDGY.

I HAD SEEN MANY OTHER INSTANCES OF CHARACTERS WHO CAN DODGE BULLETS, SO I WASN'T ALL THAT WILLING TO DO ONE AT FIRST. BUT FOR VARIOUS REASONS, I LIFTED THAT RESTRICTION AND CAME AROUND TO THE IDEA THAT I NEEDED SOMEONE WHO COULD DO MUCH MORE. SO RODRIGEZ BECAME AN EXTREMELY POWERFUL MAN. WHILE DRAWING HIM, I ASKED MYSELF, "IN THE END, EVEN IF VIU AND COLICE DIDN'T TRY THEIR BEST, COULDN'T THEY SUCCEED AS LONG AS THIS ONE MAN WAS WITH THEM?" WHAT A MESS THAT WAS.

CHARACTER FILE #10B



ROBERT RODRIGEZ

IMAGE SOURCE: ALTHOUGH I TRIED TO AVOID THE USE OF ANY "MOTIF" AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE IN THIS WORK, THERE WAS ONE FOR RODRIGEZ. MANY READERS MAY HAVE NOTICED. IT WAS BISHOP, FROM "X-MEN." I SOMEHOW, OR PERHAPS EXPECTEDLY, ARRIVED AT RODRIGEZ IN THE PROCESS OF PUTTING A CHARACTER TOGETHER WITH A STRONG, TANNED COMPLEXION AND STRIKING EYES THAT DON'T ALLOW ANYONE TO FATHOM WHAT'S IN HIS MIND. WATSUKI HAS MUCH TO LEARN. NOBUHIRO IS LIMITED.

DESIGN: RODRIGEZ'S FACE IS BISHOP. HOWEVER, I DIDN'T DRAW HIM EXACTLY AS IN THE AMERICAN COMIC, BUT RATHER USED THE FACE SHAPE AS A STARTING POINT. AS FOR HIS BODY, I USED A SHAPE FOR ARMOR BARON THAT I HAD DISCARDED. (DETAILS IN MY SECTION ON THE BARON.)

ON A SIDE NOTE, DESPITE BEING A GUNSLINGER, RODRIGEZ NEVER ONCE SHOOTS A GUN... WHAT A MESS.

CHAPTER 21: POINT

JULY 1, 1880 JUST BEFORE
DAWN





THE LOCATION
IS FORT SMITH,
ARKANSAS.

THE DATE
IS JULY 1,
1880.

103

A GHOST
TOWN LOCATED
NEARBY AT
THE SITE OF
AN ABANDONED
COAL MINE.

A GUIDE TO
GUN BLAZE
WEST WILL
APPEAR
THERE AT
THE CRACK
OF DAWN.

OH, I
DIDN'T
KNOW
THAT.

AT THE
"CRACK OF
DAWN"?!
AT THE

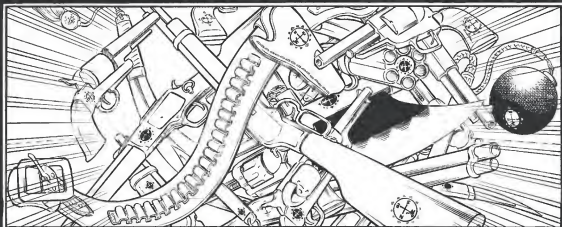
WE
COLLECTED
THOSE,
TOO.

YES, IT
IS THE
"SIGN TO
THE WEST."

...DO YOU
KNOW
ANYTHING
ABOUT IT?

THIS
MARK...

S
H
F



UH, BUT SOME
HAVE MARKS
WITH DIFFERENT
COLORS.

WHAT
DOES IT
MEAN?

WHOA!

AWESOME!
SO MANY!!

IN OTHER
WORDS, ONCE
THAT ZERO
YEAR HAS
PASSED, IT
BECOMES A
MERE
SOUVENIR.

IT APPEARS
THAT THE SIGN
TO THE WEST
MARK IS...

...A PASS TO
GUN BLAZE WEST
APPLICABLE ONLY
TO ITS PARTICULAR
ZERO YEAR.

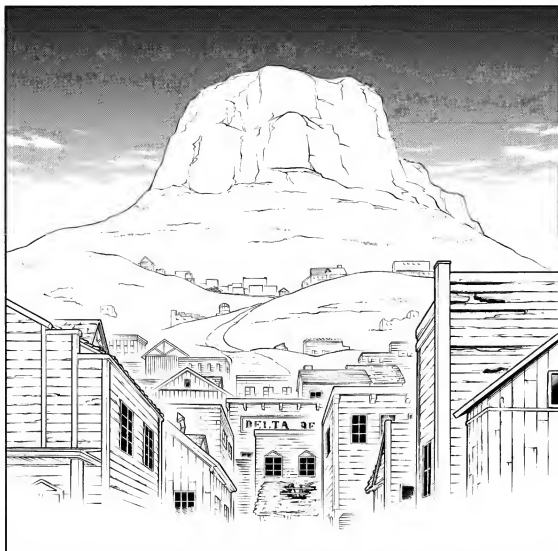
WE DID SOME
RESEARCH
AND THE
MARKS
CHANGE
COLOR EVERY
ZERO YEAR.

IT ATTRACTS
OUTLAWS AND
DRAWS THEM
TO THE NEXT
ZERO YEAR'S
POINT.

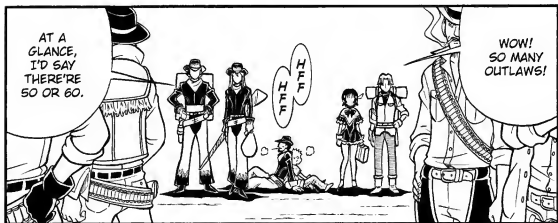
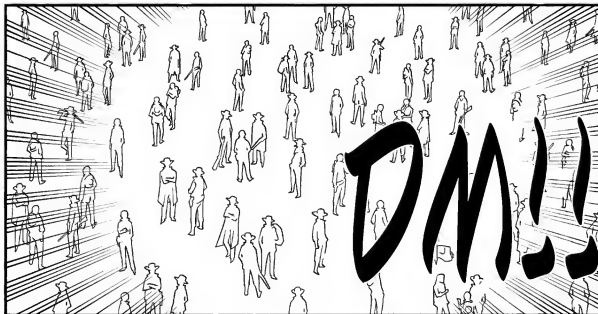
BUT THAT
SOUVENIR IS
PROOF OF THE
EXISTENCE OF
GUN BLAZE
WEST.

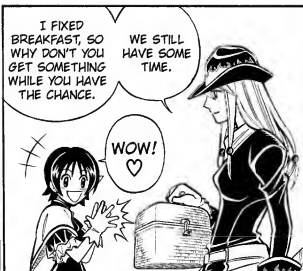
WILL'S
COMPASS
IS RED, SO
IT'S FROM
1860—AN
ITEM FROM
A ZERO
YEAR 20
YEARS
BACK.



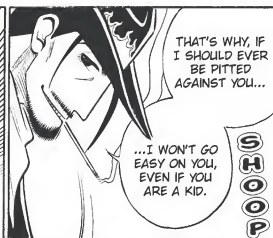
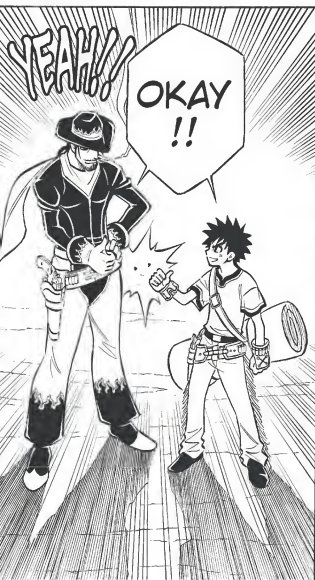


CHAPTER 21: POINT

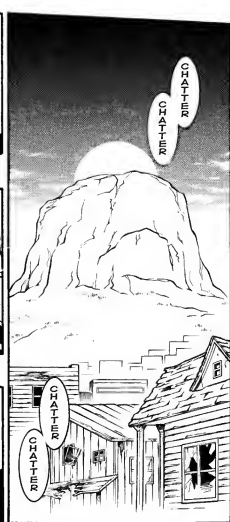






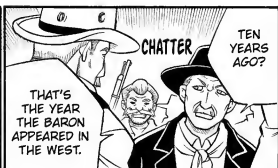


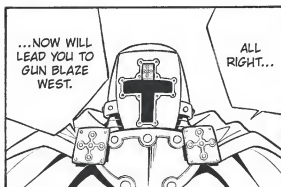






◀ READ THIS WAY ▶





...NOT ALL
WHO WISH
TO GO WILL
BE ALLOWED
TO.

HOW-
EVER...

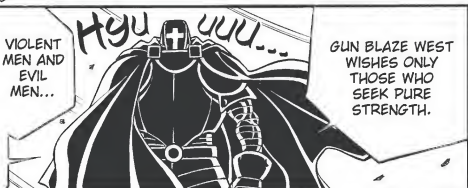


VIOLENT
MEN AND
EVIL
MEN...

...AND THOSE
WHO ARE NOT
STRONG
ENOUGH WILL
BE WEEDED
OUT RIGHT
NOW!

Hya uuu...

GUN BLAZE WEST
WISHES ONLY
THOSE WHO
SEEK PURE
STRENGTH.



SURELY
YOU'RE NOT
GOING FIGHT
ALL OF US
HERE BY
YOURSELF?!

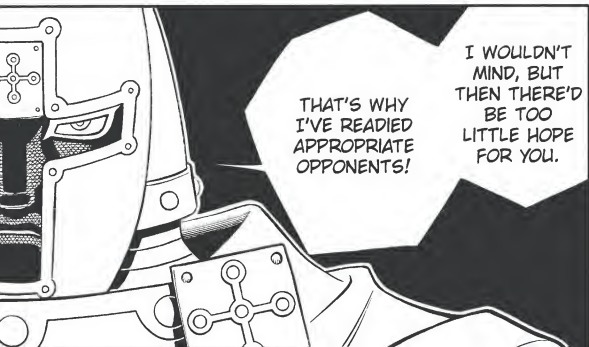
WHAT'S HE
MEAN BY
THAT?

WEEDED
OUT?



THAT'S WHY
I'VE READIED
APPROPRIATE
OPPONENTS!

I WOULDN'T
MIND, BUT
THEN THERE'D
BE TOO
LITTLE HOPE
FOR YOU.





DOOM!!!

OF COURSE,
THEIR ARMOR
MAY BE INFERIOR
TO MINE, BUT NO
BULLET CAN
PIERCE IT.

THEY ARE
THE PRIDE
OF MY
BUSINESS
EMPIRE.
THEY ARE
THE "ARMOR
ARMY"!

DM DM DM DM

THEY ARE MY
SIMPLE BUT
STURDY PRIVATE
ARMY, SPECIALLY
SELECTED FROM
AMONG MY MEN!

IF YOU WANT TO
REACH GUN BLAZE
WEST, FIGHT THEM
AND SHOW YOUR
STRENGTH!

CHATTER CHATTER

I'VE LET THEM
EACH HAVE ONE OF
THIS YEAR'S SIGN
TO THE WEST—THE
PASS TO GUN
BLAZE WEST.

...WILL BE
LED TO
GUN BLAZE
WEST!!

SKF SKF SKF

YOUR
TIME LIMIT
WILL BE
DUSK!

ONLY THOSE
WHO OBTAIN
A SIGN TO THE
WEST BEFORE
SUNSET...



CONCEPT: I BEGAN WITH THE CONCEPT OF HAVING ACTUAL HISTORICAL FIGURES APPEAR. THEY ARE THE ADULTS VII AND HIS FRIENDS CAN RELY ON BUT WITH THE ADDED CONCEPT OF BEING RIVALS THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY SURPASS.

J.J.'S REAL NAME IS JESSE JAMES, AN OUTLAW'S OUTLAW FAMILIAR TO THOSE WHO KNOW WESTERNS. HE BECAME LEGENDARY AS A CHIVALROUS ROBBER AND IS AT THE TOP OF THE LIST AMONG MOST-LOVED CHARACTERS IN WESTERNS.

JIM'S REAL NAME IS JIM YOUNGER. MYRA'S IS MYRA BELLE SHIRLEY. BOTH WERE WELL-KNOWN MEMBERS OF THE JAMES GANG AND ARE SHARP-SHOOTING OUTLAWS.

IT WAS FUN TO DRAW THEM AS ADULTS WHO SHOWED UNDERSTANDING TO VII AND HIS FRIENDS, WHO WERE CHILDREN. (...COULD THAT BE PROOF THAT I'VE BECOME AN OLD MAN...?)

CHARACTER FILE #11



J.J.'S GANG

IMAGE SOURCE: J.J. IS "MARCUS" WITH REAL SKILLS. HOWEVER, HE IS NOT AS GENTLE AS MARCUS. HE IS, AFTER ALL, ONE OF THE "POWER ELITE." THERE WAS NO IMAGE SOURCE FOR JIM. MYRA WAS A "FEMALE GUNSLINGER."

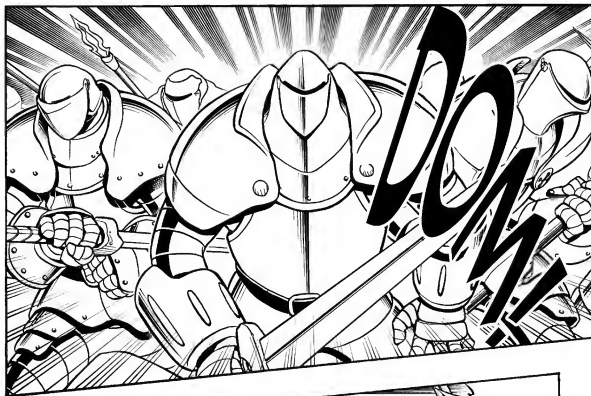
DESIGN: I BEGAN WITH THE CONCEPT OF A TEAM ALL DRESSED ALIKE. THEN I ADDED THE LOOK OF A FRIEND OF MINE. THIS FRIEND WORE ALL BLACK AND BOOTS WITH A FLAME PATTERN. SINCE MANGA USUALLY SHOWS UPPER-BODY IMAGES, I PLACED A FLAME PATTERN NOT ONLY ON THE BOOTS BUT ALL OVER THE BODY TO COMPLETE THE DESIGN.

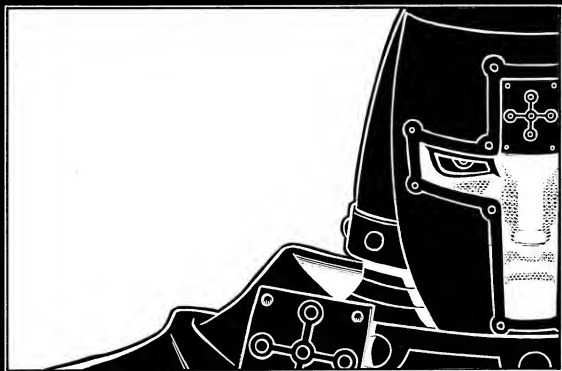
THE WEAPONS ARE ALL FROM MY IMAGINATION. THE NAME "DRILL LOCK," HOWEVER, CAME FROM GETTER 2 OF GETTER ROBO, ONE OF MY "BIBLES."

ON A SIDE NOTE, THE "COFFEE WITH MILK" INCIDENT WHERE J.J. APPEARS IS BASED ON AN ACTUAL STORY OF A NOVELIST I'M FRIENDS WITH. (OF COURSE, I HAVE THE NOVELIST'S PERMISSION.) THANK YOU, K-SAN.

CHAPTER 22: DOUBLE MONSTER







CHAPTER 22: DOUBLE MONSTER











ISN'T THAT
A COWARDLY
TACTIC?



I DON'T KNOW ANY-
THING ABOUT
STRATAGEMS OR
COMPLICATED
STUFF LIKE
THAT...

...BUT IF HE
NEVER MENTIONED
ANY RULES, THEN
ONE AGAINST ONE
IS ALLOWED,
RIGHT?

THIS ISN'T
COWARDICE.
IT'S A
STRATAGEM.
IN THE FIRST
PLACE, THE
BARON NEVER
SAID ANYTHING
ABOUT A ONE-
ON-ONE RULE.



IT'S A LOT
MORE SERIOUS
THAN THE
SCUFFLES IN
ST. LOUIS AND
AT THE
CIRCUS, YOU
KNOW...

LOOK...
DO YOU
UNDER-
STAND
WHAT THIS
BATTLE
MEANS?

GLENCH



...I PREFER
ONE
AGAINST
ONE!

IF THAT'S
THE CASE,
INSTEAD OF
THREE
AGAINST
ONE...





THAT'S WHAT I
WANT TO FIND
OUT, SO I CAN'T
AVOID STRONG
GUYS!!

BUT THAT'S
PRECISELY WHY
I WANT TO
FIND OUT
HOW STRONG
I CAN BECOME.

OF COURSE
I CARE IF I
CAN'T REACH
GUN BLAZE
WEST.

I'VE BEEN
RUNNING AND
TRAINING FIVE
YEARS FOR
THIS.

BUT
IT'S MORE
SATISFYING TO
FIGHT THE
STRONGEST
GUYS!

I LEARNED
THE HARD
WAY WHEN
I FOUGHT
RINGMASTER.

...IT SEEMS THAT
GUN BLAZE WEST
AND BECOMING
STRONGER ARE
ABSOLUTELY
INSEPARABLE.

FOR
YOU,
VIU...

HE PROBABLY
DOES. I MEAN,
HE IS THE
GUIDE, YOU
KNOW.

OH,
THAT'S
RIGHT.

BUT DO YOU
KNOW THAT
BARON ACTUALLY
POSSESSES
THE NEWEST
SIGN TO THE
WEST?

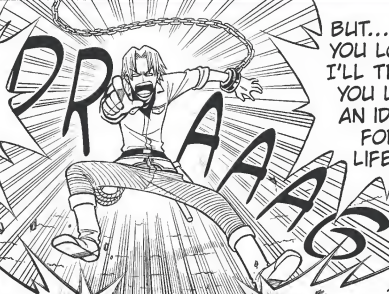
DM...







IF YOU DON'T
WANT THAT
TO HAPPEN,
YOU'D
BETTER WIN.
EVEN IF IT
KILLS YOU!!



BUT...! IF
YOU LOSE,
I'LL TREAT
YOU LIKE
AN IDIOT
FOR
LIFE!!

IT'S
OKAY.

I'LL BE
FINE. I CAN
HANDLE IT.

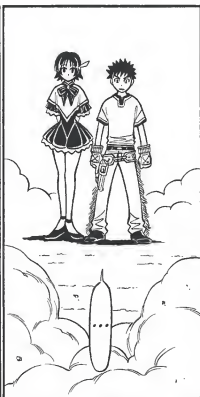
UH...
COLICE?

"FOR
LIFE",
HE
SAYS...

...YOU'VE
GOT
TO BE
KIDDING.

BUT IF YOU
LOSE, I'LL
TREAT YOU
LIKE AN IDIOT
FOR LIFE, TOO.

GOOD
LUCK!



...CAN'T
AFFORD
TO LOSE...



...NOW
REALLY...

OKAY.
OKAY!!

P
A
P
!!

OKAY!

DASH

DO YOUR
BEST
TOO,
COLICE.
DON'T
LOSE!

OH
WELL.

I
SUPPOSE
I CAN
ENJOY
MYSELF
WITH
A LITTLE
ONE-ON-ONE!!

CHK

NOW
THEN...
THREE
AGAINST
ONE
SEEMED
MORE FUN.

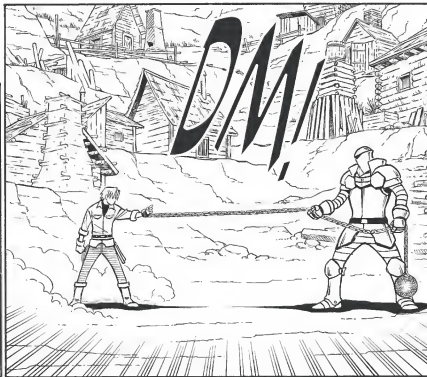
WHO WAS
IT THAT
TAUGHT YOU
CONCENTRA-
TION ONE?

SURE.
SURE.

WE'RE STILL TOGETHER. WE DID HAVE A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION, THOUGH.

THE OTHERS DIDN'T FOLLOW YOU, I SEE.

YOU'RE NOT TOGETHER ANYMORE?



WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT, DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ARE ONLY NATURAL.

WE SEEK THE SAME GUN BLAZE WEST, BUT OUR GOALS ARE DIFFERENT.

COME ON!!

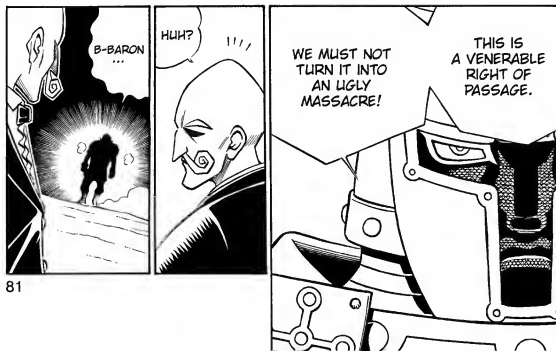
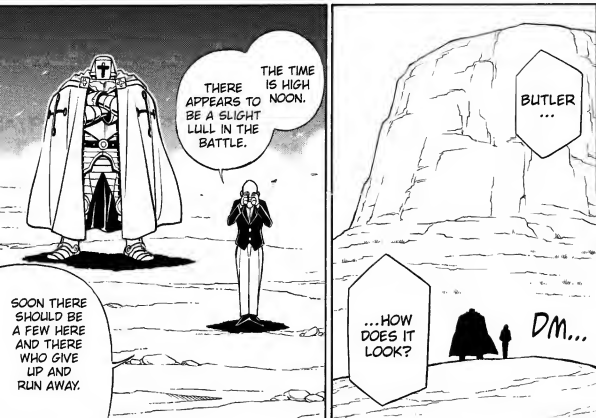
VERY GOOD. I TAKE THAT AS HAVING THE WILL TO FIGHT.

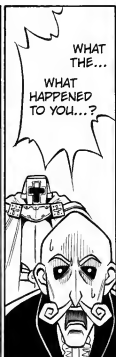
IF I DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO GET BY YOU ALONE, THEN I WOULDN'T HAVE MUCH CHANCE FURTHER DOWN THE LINE.

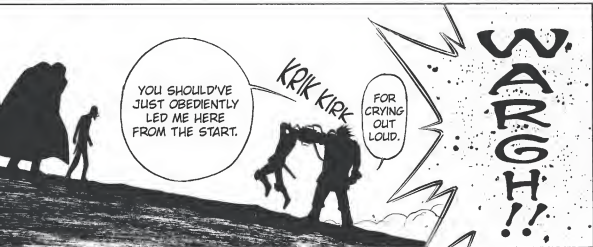
AND ANOTHER THING...

...THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF THE PATH TO GUN BLAZE WEST.

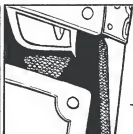
GRIP





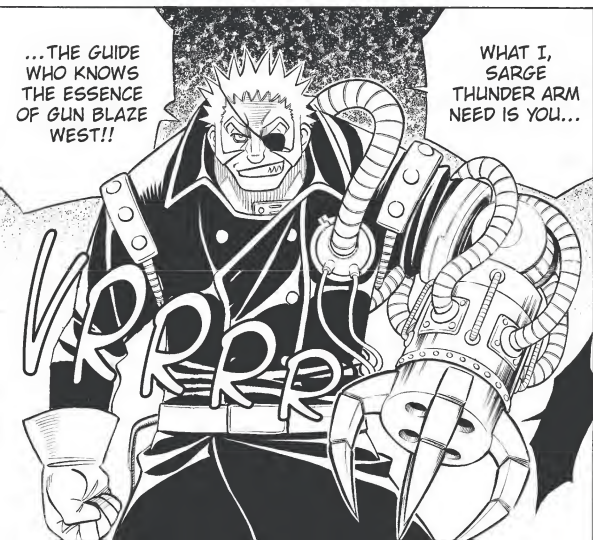


OKAY.
I DON'T NEED
THIS PEON
ANYMORE.



RETURN
THAT MAN
TO ME.

YOU'VE
ALREADY
WON.



CONCEPT: JUST AS HE APPEARS IN THIS STORY, HE IS "AMERICA'S FIRST SUPERHUMAN SOLDIER." THIS IS A FAMILIAR THEME IN AMERICAN COMICS: SOMEONE IS DRUGGED, SURGICALLY ALTERED, AND TURNED INTO A CYBORG SUPER SOLDIER. IT WAS SOMETHING I REALLY WANTED TO HAVE HAPPEN IN A STORY SET IN AMERICA.

IN THE BEGINNING, I THOUGHT OF THUNDER ARM AS ONE OF VILU'S GROUP. BUT AT THIS LATE POINT, THINKING THAT THIS SERIES MIGHT NOT CONTINUE MUCH LONGER (ALTHOUGH CANCELLATION OF THE SERIES HAD NOT YET BEEN DECIDED), I CHANGED THE ROLES OF THE CHARACTERS IN DIFFERENT WAYS IN ATTEMPT TO BRING THE STORY TOGETHER. AS A RESULT, THUNDER ARM BECAME A VILLAIN WHO HELPS ACCENTUATE THE BARON'S STRENGTH. ACTUALLY IT WAS KIND OF A SHAME, BECAUSE HE WAS A CHARACTER I HAD FUN DRAWING.

IMAGE SOURCE: THE IMAGE SOURCE FOR THUNDER ARM WAS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AS THE CONCEPT: "A SUPER SOLDIER WHO APPEARS IN AMERICAN COMICS."

CHARACTER FILE #12



SARGE THUNDER ARM

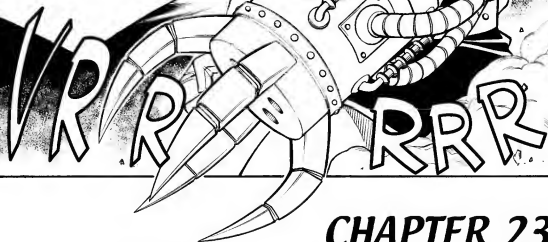
DESIGN: KEEPING IN MIND THAT THE LEFT HALF OF SARGE'S BODY WOULD BE MECHANIZED, I BEGAN BY DESIGNING HIS HUMAN PARTS TO LOOK "AMERICAN." AS FOR THE MECHANIZED PORTION, I BEGAN BY DOING THE CONCEPT AND ROUGH DESIGN BY MYSELF, THEN ASKED TWO OF MY ASSISTANTS TO DO HIS ARM SECTION AND BACK SECTION SEPARATELY AND CLEAN UP THE OVERALL DESIGN.

I CONSIDERED A RETRO-TYPE DESIGN WHERE SARGE CARRIED AROUND A LARGE BOILER PUMPING BLACK SMOKE INTO THE AIR, BUT GAVE UP THE IDEA BECAUSE IT MADE HIM SEEM TOO WEAK.

ON A SIDE NOTE, I WAS ADMONISHED BY SOME READERS WHO SAID THAT THE THUNDER ARM CHARACTER DEFINITELY HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH WESTERNS. I SINCERELY APOLOGIZE TO THOSE WHOSE FEELINGS I HURT.

WHAT I,
SARGE
THUNDER
ARM NEED,
IS YOU...

...THE GUIDE
WHO KNOWS THE
ESSENCE OF GUN
BLAZE WEST!!

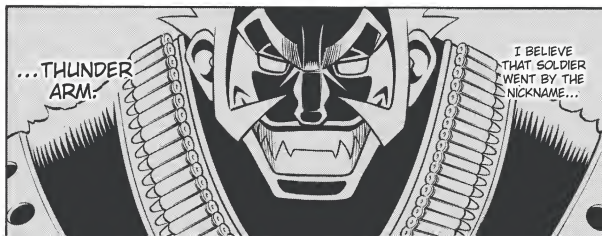


CHAPTER 23: SUPER SOLDIER

ARE
YOU WITH
THE U.S.
ARMY?

"SARGE"
...

HYOOOOO



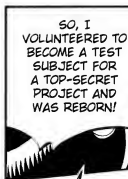


THEY SAID
THAT IT HAD
RIPPED THE
LEFT HALF OF
HIS BODY TO
PIECES AND
KILLED HIM!



HOW-
EVER!

I HEARD THUN-
DER ARM TOOK A
DIRECT HIT FROM
A CANNON
DURING THE
SIEGE OF PE-
TERSBERG.



I CAN STILL
FIGHT, AND
I WANT TO
FIGHT MUCH,
MUCH MORE.

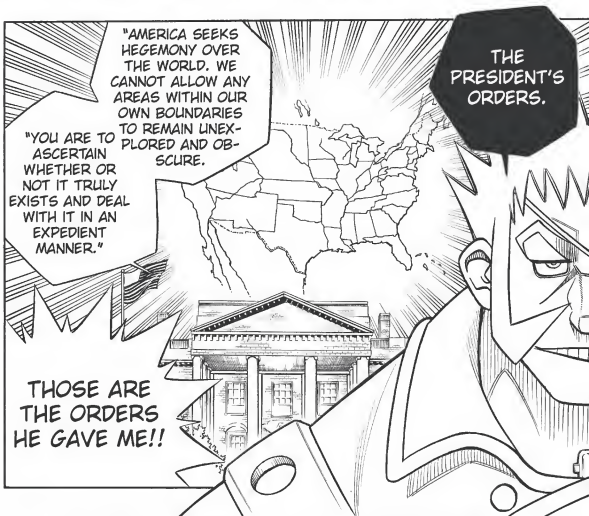
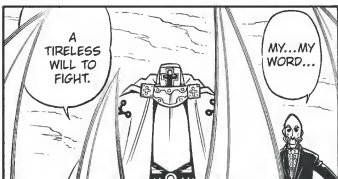
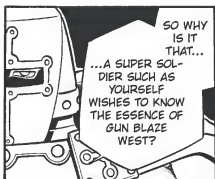
BUT I'M NOT
GOING TO DIE
JUST BECAUSE
MY LEFT SIDE
GOT DESTROYED.

...AMERICA'S
FIRST

THEY RE-
PLACED MY
MISSING BODY
PARTS WITH
PROTOTYPE
WEAPONS TO
CREATE...

"SUPER
SOLDIER"!



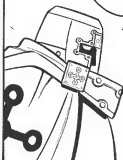


AND ALSO
BECAUSE
YOU
ARE NOT
TRYING TO
LEARN ABOUT
IT FOR
YOURSELF.

IF YOU WANT TO
LEARN ABOUT GUN
BLAZE WEST,
YOU HAVE TO GO
TO GUN BLAZE WEST.

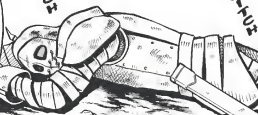


I
REFUSE.



...WOULD
NEVER
ACCEPT A
MAN LIKE YOU
THAT TAKES
SUCH JOY IN
VIOLENCE.

F3-F02



F3-F02

BUT MOST
OF ALL,
GUN BLAZE
WEST...

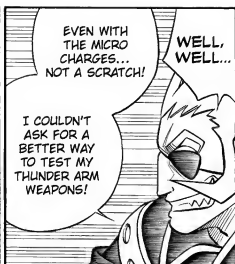


...FOR
MORE!!



I
COULDN'T
HAVE
ASKED...

U-00-00



VRRRR

FLAME
THROWER
!!

FSH

MY
LORD
BARON!

SHOOON



HMPH!



YOU ARE NOT
QUALIFIED TO
PROCEED ANY
FURTHER!

YOU WILL
BE ELIMI-
NATED!!

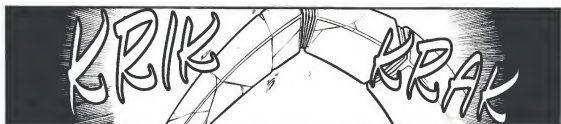
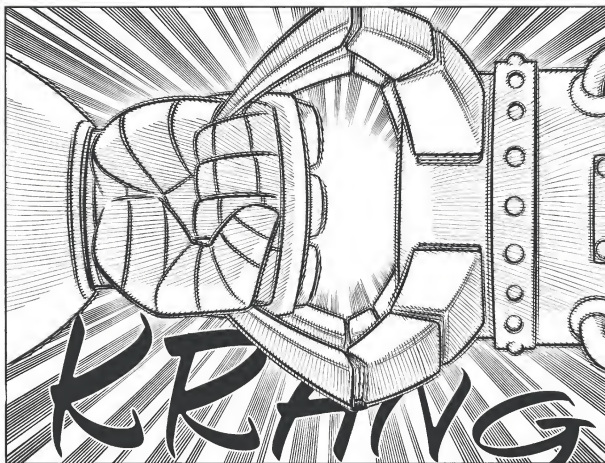
YOU
REALLY
SEEM TO
ENJOY
VIOLENCE
FROM THE
BOTTOM
OF YOUR
HEART.

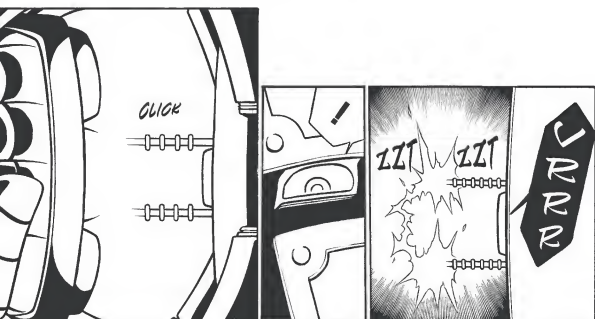
YOU'RE THE
FIRST ONE
THAT THIS
DIDN'T WORK
ON!!

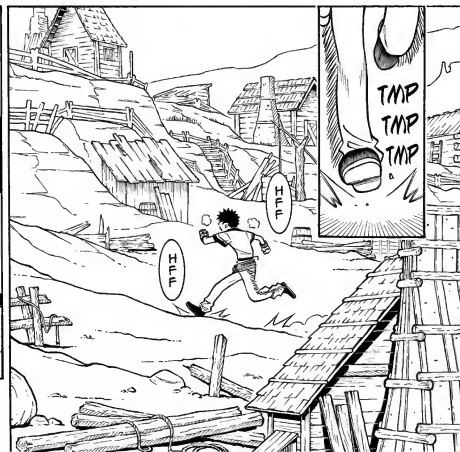
IMPRESSIVE,
ARMOR
BARON!
YOU'RE
AS GOOD AS
THEY SAY!

WELL,
NOW
...!













IS THIS THE
POWER OF GUN
BLAZE WEST?!



A-HA!
SO IS
THIS ALL
YOU'VE
GOT?



SO IT'S
A WORTHLESS
LEGEND CREATED
BY WORTHLESS
OUTLAWS,
AFTER ALL?!



JUST
A MINUTE.



I, SUPER
SOLDIER
SARGE
THUNDER
ARM WILL...

IF THIS IS
ALL IT IS,
I HAVE NO
NEED TO
REPORT THIS.



HUH?



...BUT DON'T
GO AROUND
DECIDING THAT
FOR YOUR-
SELF, YOU
PUNK!

I DON'T
KNOW
WHO YOU
ARE...

TMP
TMP
TMP



AND THERE ARE
OTHERS WHO
SEEK IT THAT
ALSO FEEL
THAT IT ISN'T
WORTHLESS!

THE GUN
BLAZE WEST
I'M SEEKING
ISN'T WORTH-
LESS!

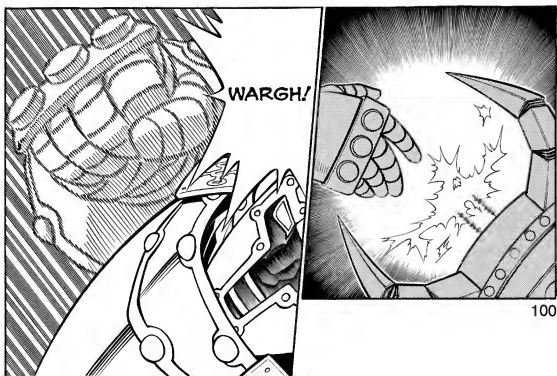
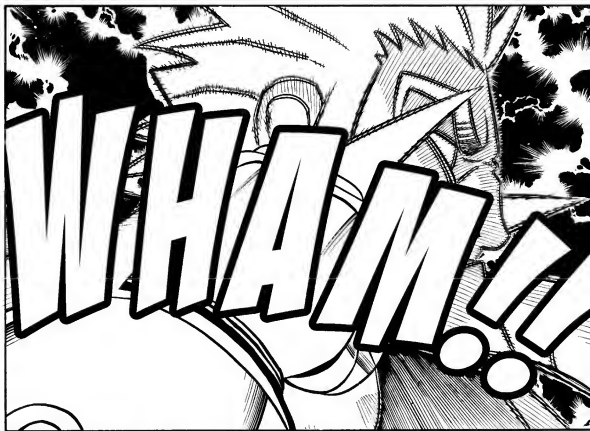


WHO ARE
YOU KID?

GET
LOST.
SHOO
SHOO!



WHERE
ARE YOU
LOOKING?



BOOM



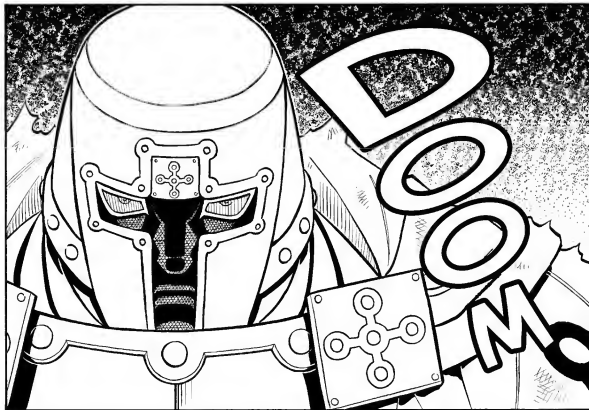
AWE-
SOME!

WOW!

TSK...
I LET
DOWN MY
GUARD...

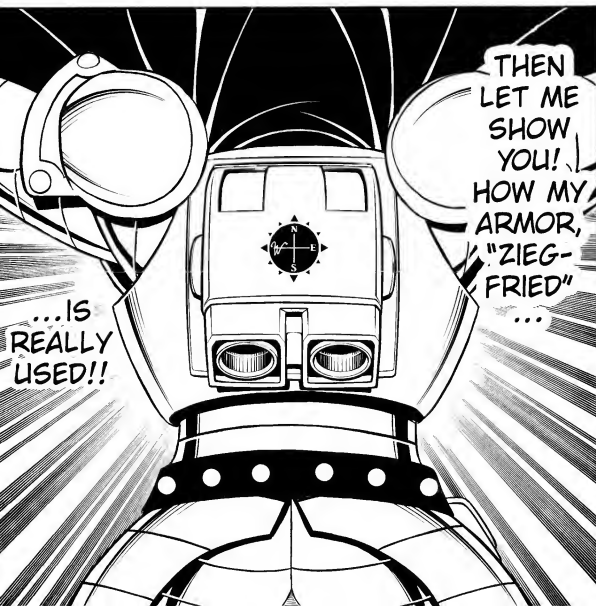
SHHHH...





...I CAN'T
BLAME YOUR
EYES FOR ONLY
BEING ABLE TO
SEE IT THAT
WAY...

PROTEC-
TIVE GEAR?
I SEE...



...IS
REALLY
USED!!

THEN
LET ME
SHOW
YOU!
HOW MY
ARMOR,
"ZIEG-
FRIED"
...

CONCEPT: IN A WORLD WHERE GUNS RULE, A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT AGAINST WHOM BULLETS HAVE NOT EFFECT. I IMAGINED ARMOR BARON AS VIU'S FOREMOST RIVAL.

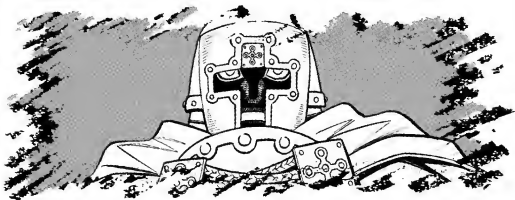
BECAUSE HE WAS A CHARACTER WHO WAS NEARLY COMPLETED IN MY MIND AS I WAS DRAWING MY PREVIOUS WORK, "RUROUNI KENSHIN," I WAS ABLE TO DRAW THE BARON WITH HARDLY ANY STRUGGLE AT ALL. I GUESS THE PROCESS OF LEAVING A CONCEPT ASIDE FOR A WHILE TO ALLOW IT TO DEVELOP IS INDISPENSABLE, AFTER ALL. I'M VERY AWARE OF THAT NOW.

TO BE TOTALLY HONEST, THE BARON WAS THE MOST ENJOYABLE CHARACTER TO DRAW. HE IS AT THE TOP OF MY LIST OF CHARACTERS I WANT TO BRING BACK IN MY NEXT WORK.

IMAGE SOURCE: AS I WAS THINKING ABOUT ARMORED CHARACTERS WITH IMPACT, THE FIRST ONE TO COME TO MIND WAS THE AMERICAN COMIC *MONSTERMEN*. HOWEVER, I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE ABSOLUTELY WRONG TO COPY THE FAMILIAR, SIMPLE-IS-BEST DESIGN OF A BLACK SUIT AND HELMET, SO I BORROWED ONLY THE IDEA OF A "GENTLEMAN WITH SPECIAL POWERS DRESSED IN ARMOR."

DESIGN: I WAS CAREFUL IN MY DESIGN, MAKING THE BARON'S HELMET A BUCKET TYPE, MAKING HIS BODY MUSCULAR AND STAYING AWAY FROM THE BLACK IMAGE, WHILE ALWAYS KEEPING IN MIND THAT I WANTED SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM *MONSTERMEN*.

CHARACTER FILE #13



ARMOR BARON

IF I MADE THE HELMET COVER HIS ENTIRE FACE, IT'D BE IMPOSSIBLE TO SHOW FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, SO I DID A LOT OF RESEARCH BEFORE DECIDING ON A MASK WITH A CROSS-SHAPED OPENING. HE IS DEFINITELY NOT A DOM FROM *GUNDAM*.

I CONSIDERED DESIGNING HIS ARMOR MORE IN THE STYLE OF A WESTERN KNIGHT, BUT I REALIZED IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO SHOW ENOUGH ACTION, SO I DREW IT MORE IN THE ANIME STYLE. IT WAS DIFFICULT, THOUGH, TO DISCARD THE IDEA OF A WESTERN KNIGHT, SO IT IS AN ISSUE FOR ME TO STUDY IN FUTURE.

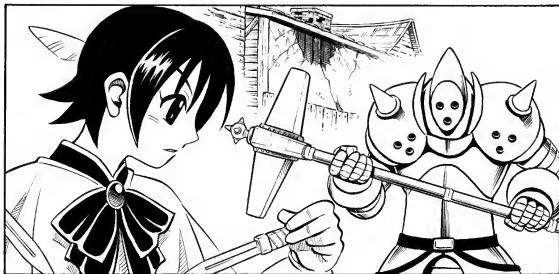
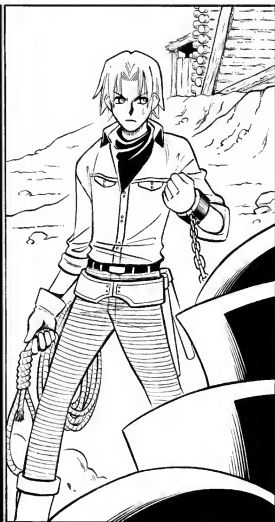
ON A SIDE NOTE, I RECEIVED LETTERS OF ADMONITION SAYING THE BARON, TOO, HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH WESTERNS. BUT FRANKLY, THE BARON VIED WITH COLICE FOR NUMBER ONE AND NUMBER TWO ON THE POPULAR CHARACTER LIST.

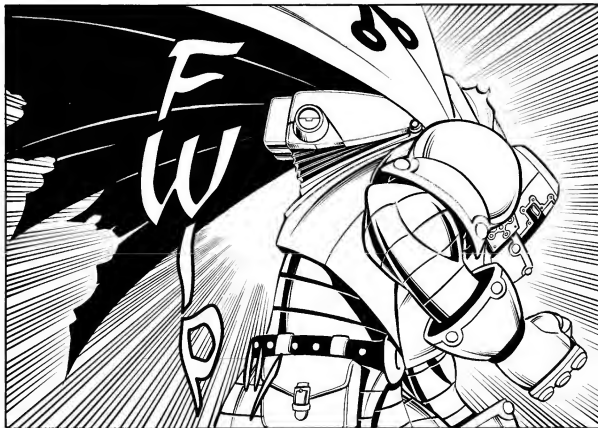
I **ALWAYS** FIND MYSELF FACED WITH THE DILEMMA OF JUST HOW FAR I SHOULD GO TO MAKE IT A MANGA FOR YOUNG BOYS. I FACED THE SAME STRUGGLE DURING MY PREVIOUS WORK, *RUROUNI KENSHIN*.

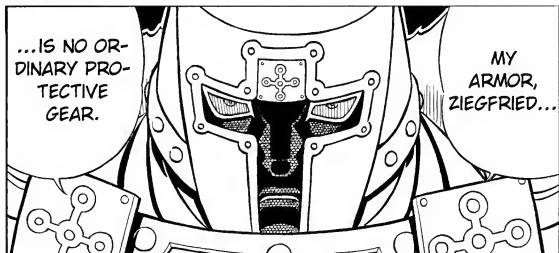
BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING, AFTER ALL, IS HOW CAN I MAKE IT FUN FOR THE READERS... FROM THAT PERSPECTIVE, I COMPLETELY FAILED THIS TIME.

I WILL APPLY MYSELF MUCH, MUCH, MUCH, MUCH, MUCH MORE SO IN FUTURE.

CHAPTER 24: HUMAN BULLET







...
PRÖJEC-
TILE!!

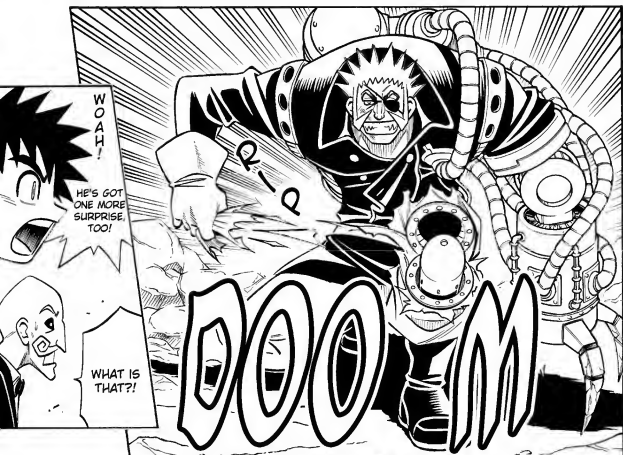
...
BECOMES
ONE
HUGE...



DON'T
MONKEY
WITH
ME!



SHOOT



WOAH!

HE'S GOT
ONE MORE
SURPRISE,
TOO!

WHAT IS
THAT?!

DOOM



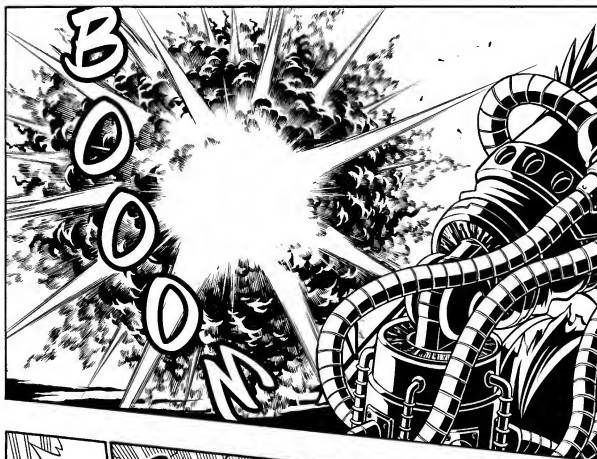
IT'S
A ROCKET
CANNON!!

IT WAS TESTED
DURING THE
CIVIL WAR, BUT
I IMPROVED IT
AND MADE IT
PRACTICAL.

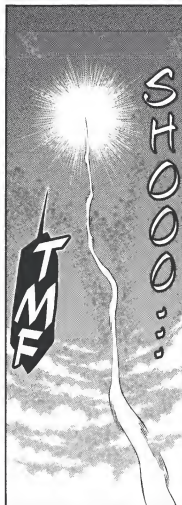


TAKE
THAT!!

FSH



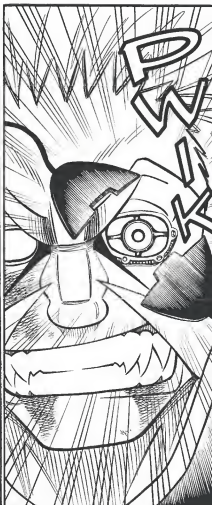




SHOOT...



H A H A !!



YOU'RE
MISTAKEN!
THAT'S A
SIGNAL
FLARE...



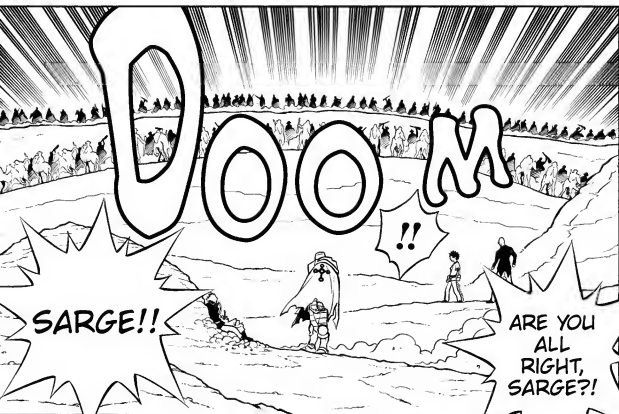
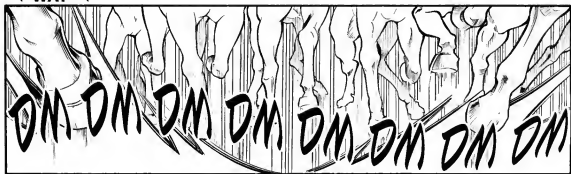
HE LOST,
BUT HE'S
CELEBRAT-
ING!

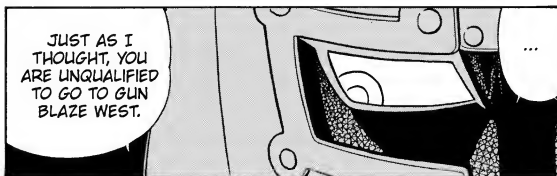
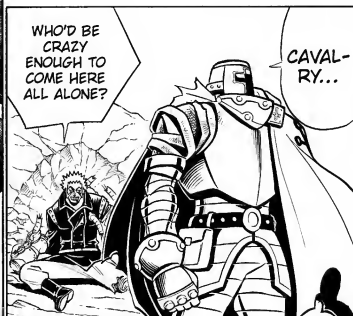
A SKY-
ROCKET!

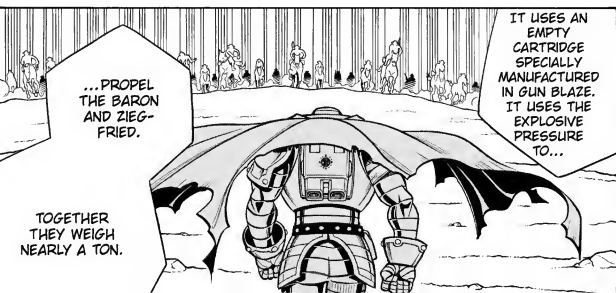
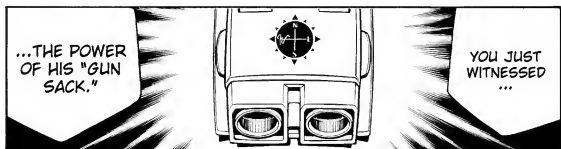
WHAT'S
THAT
SOUND?



DON'T
THINK
YOU'VE
WON, YOU
IRON-CLAD
DOUGH
BOY!









IS
INVINCIBLE!!

...LORD
BARON



...A SIGNAL
THAT HE'S
RELEASING
THE SAFETY.

THAT
SWITCH IS
WHAT YOU
MIGHT
CALL...

CLICK



ONCE HE
PUSHES
IT...



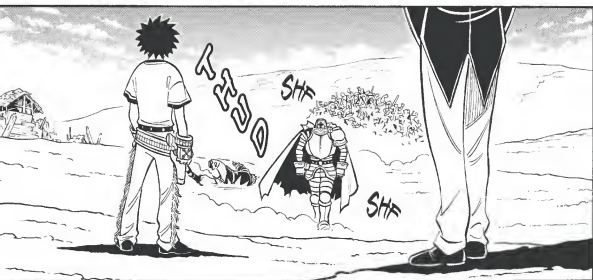




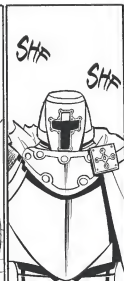


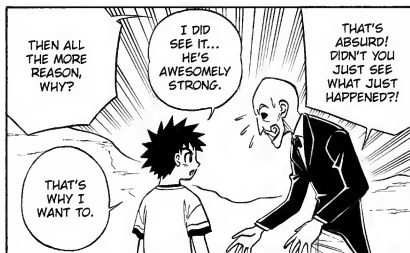
...IF HE
WANTS TO
KNOW ABOUT
GUN BLAZE
WEST, COME
OUT AND SEE
IT FOR
HIMSELF.

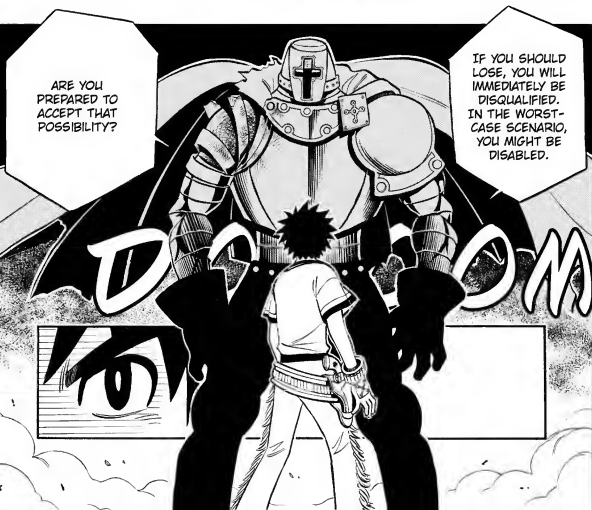
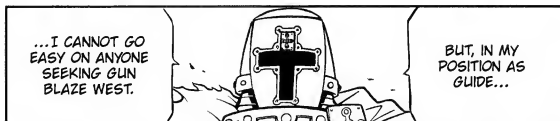
GO BACK AND
TELL THE
PRESIDENT
THAT...



YOUNG MAN,
THERE'S
STILL
TIME
BEFORE
SUNSET...







FOR THIS LAST FILE, I WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE THINGS AROUND A BIT AND BRING UP A FEW CANCELLED CHARACTERS. TOGETHER WITH MY ROUGH SKETCHES ON PAGE 144, I HOPE YOU ENJOY THIS TINY COMICS FREEBIE TO PASS THE TIME.

BUFFALO RIDER: THIS CHARACTER APPEARS BRIEFLY IN THE FINAL CHAPTER.

JUST ONCE, I WANTED TO INCLUDE SOMEONE WHO COULD CONTROL ANIMALS. SO I THOUGHT, "IF THERE'S GOING TO BE SOMEONE WHO CAN CONTROL ANIMALS, A NATIVE AMERICAN IS THE ONLY WAY TO GO." I ALSO WANTED TO DO A RUNAWAY TRAIN AND A GREAT CHASE SCENE.

BUFFALO RIDER APPEARED IN THE LAST CHAPTER SIMPLY TO SATISFY MY WISH TO SHOW EVERY CHARACTER THAT APPEARED ON THE COVER OF CHAPTER ONE. HE WAS VERY WELL RECEIVED BY MY MANGA ARTIST FRIENDS, WHICH MADE ME VERY HAPPY.

SAMURAI X: A SAMURAI OF THE WILDERNESS-ONE OF THE STANDARDS IN ANY WESTERN. I VAGUELY THOUGHT OF HIM AS COLICE'S OLDER BROTHER OR MAYBE HER BOYFRIEND. ON A SIDE NOTE, THE NAME "SAMURAI X" WAS

CHARACTER FILE #14



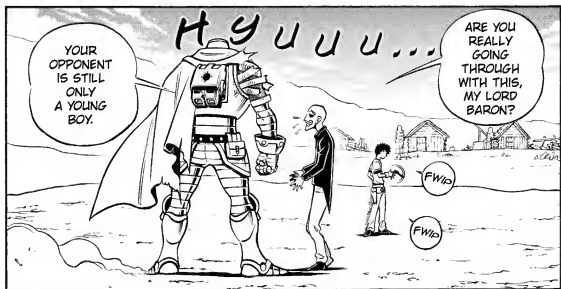
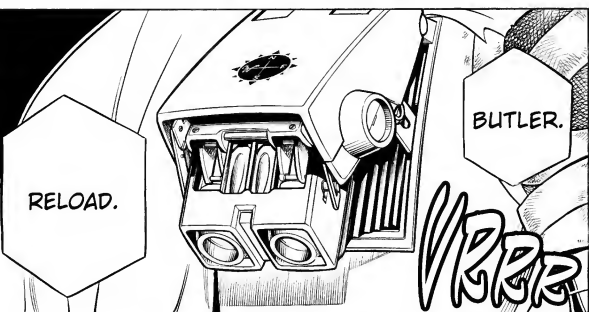
BUFFALO RIDER WITH OTHERS

THE TITLE OF THE ENGLISH ADAPTATION OF *RUIROUNI KENSHIN*, MY PREVIOUS WORK. I TAKE MY HAT OFF TO THE TALENT THAT PAIRED A PURE-JAPANESE WORD LIKE "SAMURAI" WITH THE ALPHABET "X" (APPARENTLY A REFERENCE TO THE CROSS-SHAPED SCAR ON HIS CHEEK). I SIMPLY LOVED IT, AND WANTED TO USE THAT NAME IN ONE OF MY OWN WORKS, BUT.... I SUPPOSE THAT WOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF COPYRIGHTS... NOT EVEN IF I'M THE ORIGINAL ARTIST.... NO, I GUESS NOT.

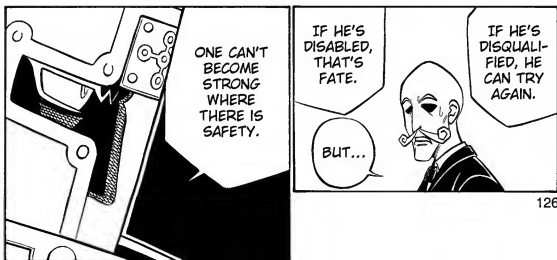
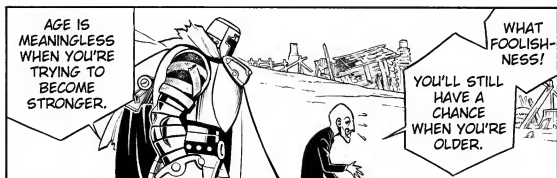
DUKE THE PAPILLON: I CAME UP WITH THIS CHARACTER WHEN I CONSIDERED A PARTNER FOR THE BARON. I ONLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT AND DIDN'T GO ANY FURTHER.

BOXER: I THOUGHT, "HOW ABOUT A HARD-PUNCHING GUNSLINGER EQUIPPED WITH PISTOLS WITH GLOVES ATTACHED WHO SPECIALIZED AT IN-FIGHTING?" UNFORTUNATELY, I FOUND A MANGA WESTERN THAT USED NEARLY THE SAME CONCEPT FOR ITS MAIN CHARACTER. IN THE END THIS IDEA WAS CANCELLED. HOWEVER, THE IDEA OF NOT USING A RIFLE AS A LONG-RANGE WEAPON EVOLVED INTO THE BARON'S GUN SACK.

AND WITH THAT, THIS CORNER COMES TO AN END.



CHAPTER 25: OUT OF SAFETY



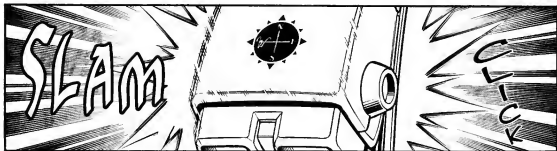


I HAVE NO
INTENTION AT
ALL OF LEADING
ANYONE TO GUN
BLAZE WEST
WHO IS
UNWILLING TO
LEAVE HIS
SAFETY ZONE.

AND...
I AM THE
GUIDE.

...I WILL
RELOAD.

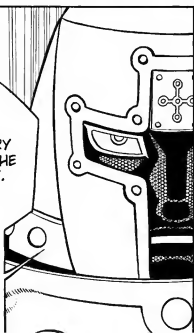
...I
UNDER-
STAND.



LET'S
DO
IT!

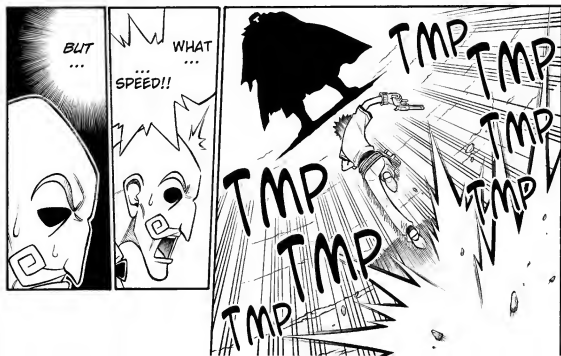
SORRY
FOR THE
WAIT.

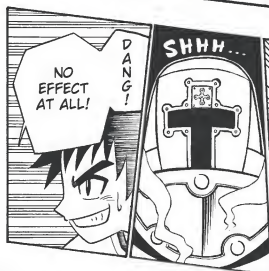
LET'S
BEGIN.

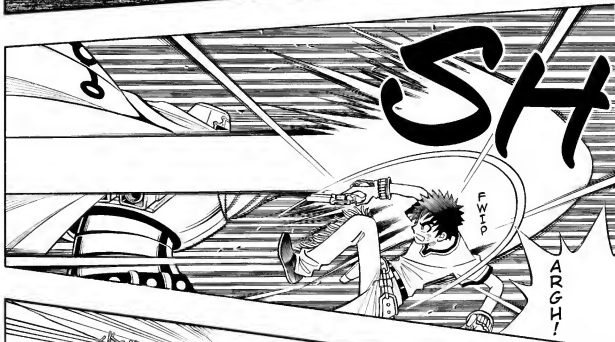
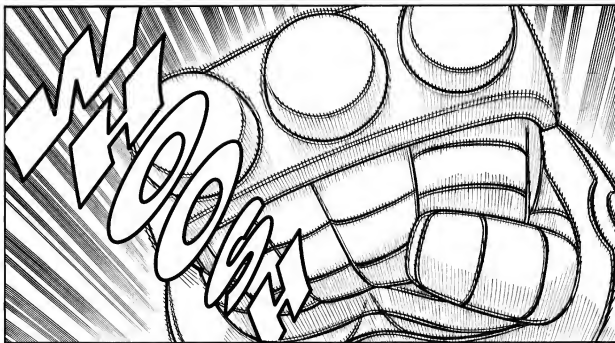


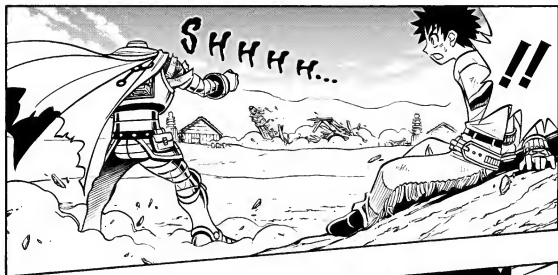


CHAPTER 25: OUT OF SAFETY





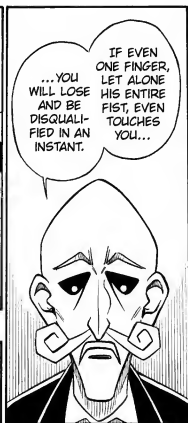




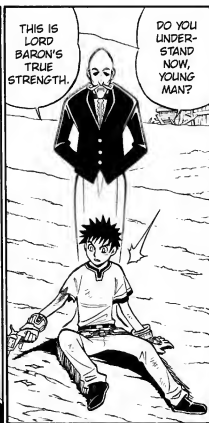


NOT ONLY THAT. IF YOU AREN'T CAREFUL...

POOF POOF
HEH HEH

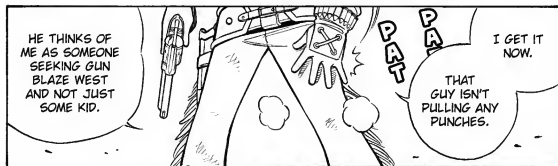


IF EVEN ONE FINGER, LET ALONE HIS ENTIRE FIST, EVEN TOUCHES YOU...
...YOU WILL LOSE AND BE DISQUALIFIED IN AN INSTANT.



THIS IS LORD BARON'S TRUE STRENGTH.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND NOW, YOUNG MAN?



HE THINKS OF ME AS SOMEONE SEEKING GUN BLAZE WEST AND NOT JUST SOME KID.

PAT PAT

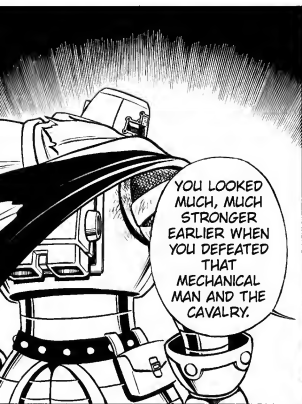
I GET IT NOW.

THAT GUY ISN'T PULLING ANY PUNCHES.



IT FEELS GOOD.



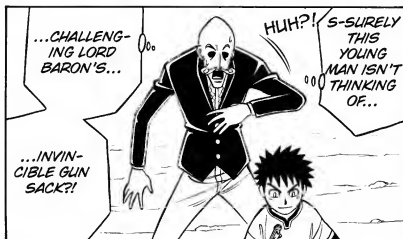
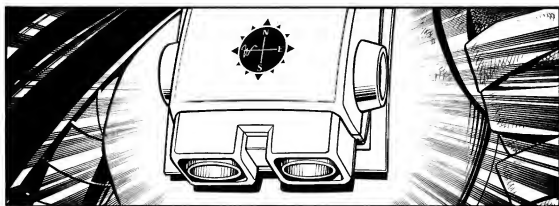


YOU LOOKED
MUCH, MUCH
STRONGER
EARLIER WHEN
YOU DEFEATED
THAT
MECHANICAL
MAN AND THE
CAVALRY.



BUT...

...THAT
WASN'T THE
EXTENT OF
YOUR
STRENGTH,
WAS IT?



...CHALLENG-
ING LORD
BARON'S...

HUH?!

S-SURELY
THIS
YOUNG
MAN ISN'T
THINKING
OF...

...INVIN-
CIBLE GUN
SACK?!



YOUR APPROACH OF WANTING TO FIGHT OPPONENTS STRONGER THAN YOURSELF...

YOUNG MAN.

...IS AN APPROPRIATE WAY TO MAKE YOURSELF STRONGER.

Hyoooo

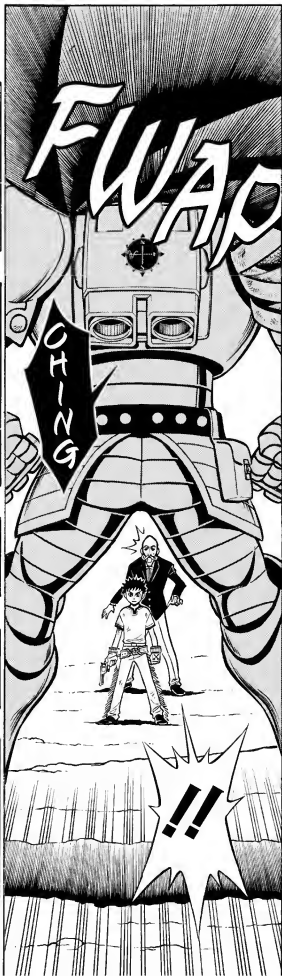
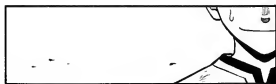
...WHAT IS IT THAT GIVES YOU SUCH CONFIDENCE? IS IT COURAGE? OR IS IT MERE RECKLESSNESS?

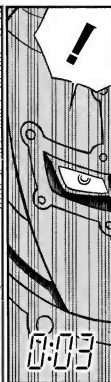
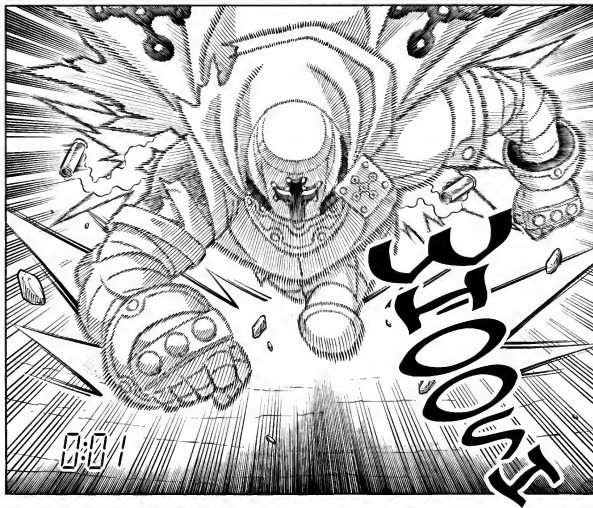
HOWEVER ...

...IF YOU CANNOT SEE THE LIMITS OF YOUR OWN STRENGTH, YOU WILL QUICKLY DESTROY YOURSELF.

...FROM THE RESULT OF OUR FIGHT!

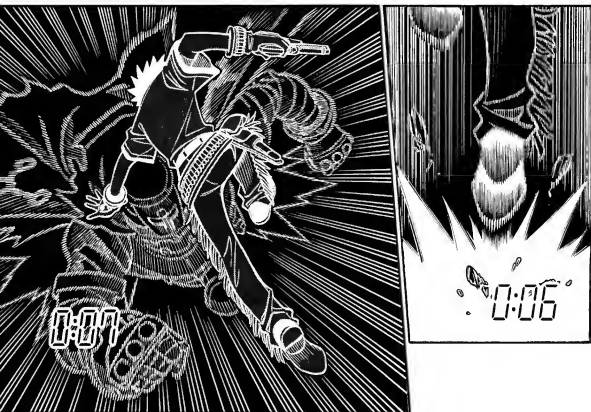
YOU'LL KNOW THE ANSWER...

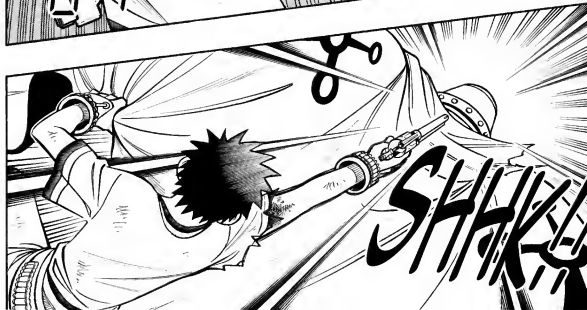
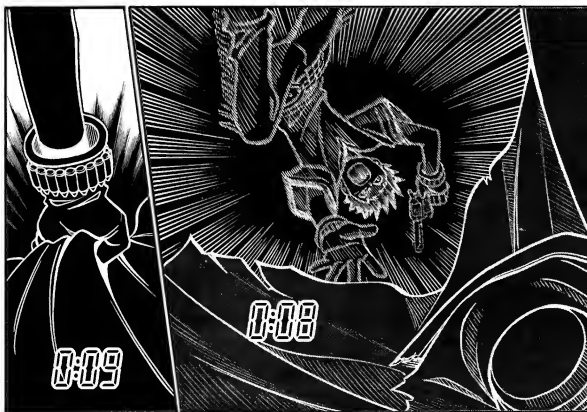






**CONCENTRATION
ONE!!**

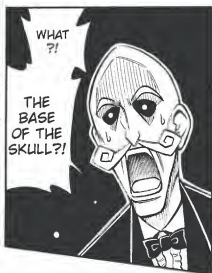






...IT CAN'T
PROTECT
YOU FROM
THE SHOCK!

NO MATTER
HOW STRONG
YOUR
ARMOR IS,
AT POINT-
BLANK
RANGE...

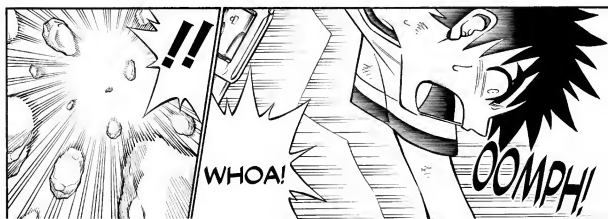


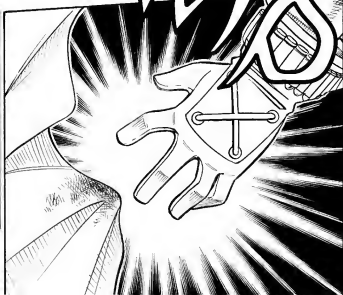
WHAT
?!

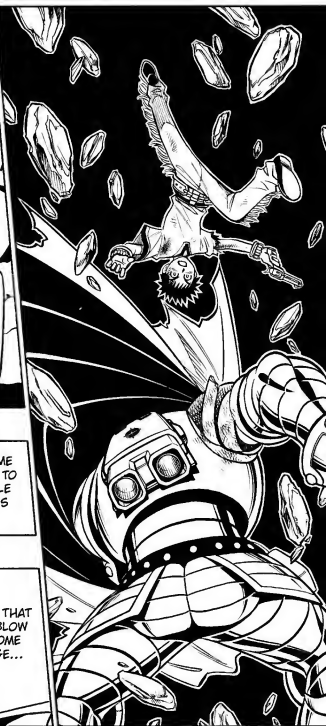
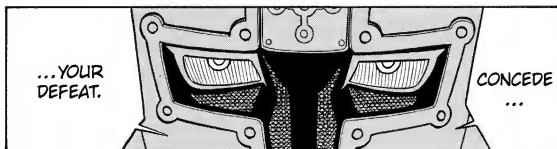
THE
BASE
OF THE
SKULL?!

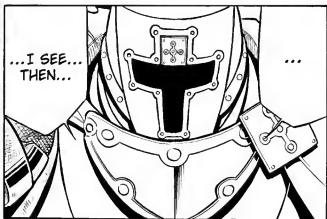


ARGH!!









Pistols with
gloves attached

Hard puncher

Duke the Papillon

Reconsider

COLICE SATOH
(KORISU SATO)
age 16

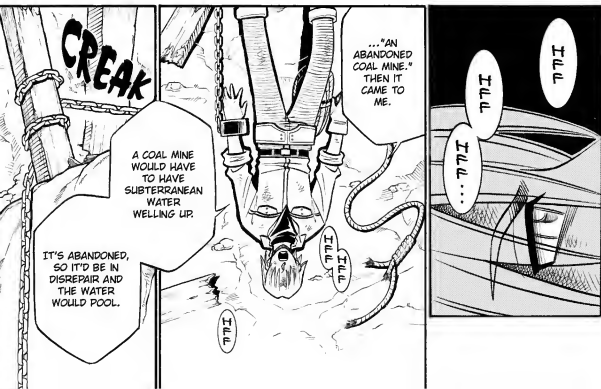
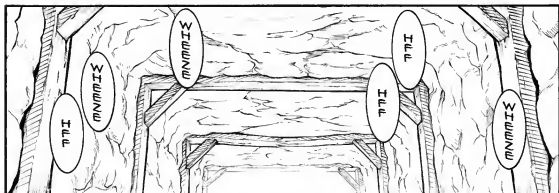
Vin Summers, age 13

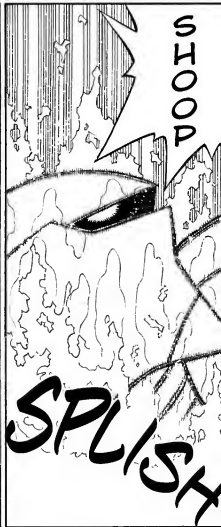
Keep to his
basic length in
order to make
it look more
western

Mad wanted
man



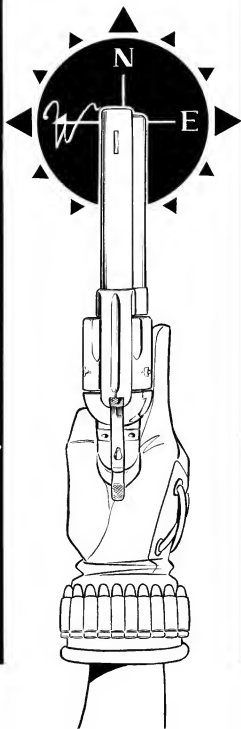
CHAPTER 26: GATHERING



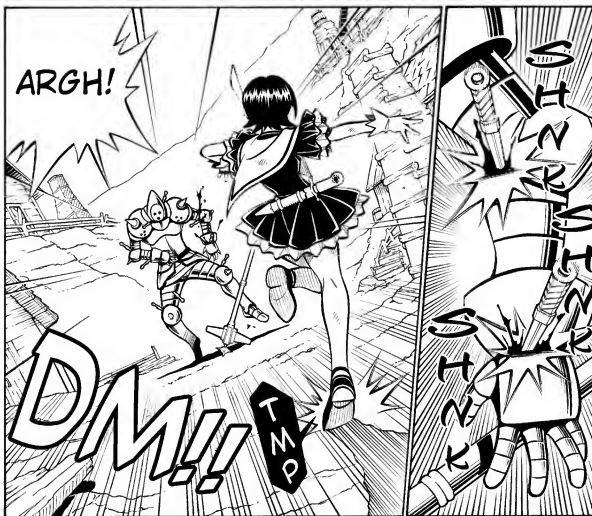


WEST

**CHAPTER 26:
GATHERING**



WARRIOR



IT'S CALLED
"ARMORED
SWORDSMAN-
SHIP." IT'S A
JAPANESE
TECHNIQUE
DEVELOPED TO
FIGHT HEAVILY
ARMORED
OPPONENTS.

PAPPA

BECAUSE
I AIMED
FOR THE
SPACES
BETWEEN
THE
JOINTS.

W-WHY?!
HOW IS IT THAT
MERE KNIVES
CAN PIERCE AN
ARMOR THAT
CAN REPEL
BULLETS?!



IF YOU WON'T
GIVE UP, I'LL
FINISH YOU
OFF WITH
THIS NEXT...
WHAT DO YOU
SAY?



I FEEL
LIKE I'M
BULLYING
A WEAK-
LING.



...I
GIVE
UP...

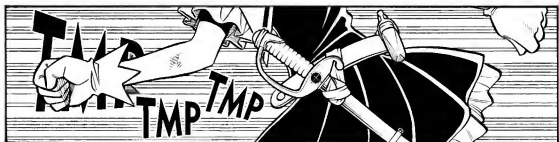


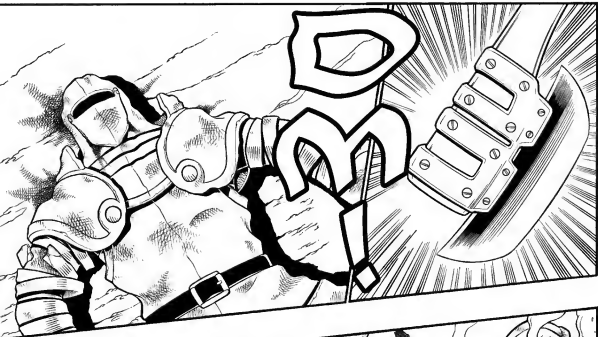
RIGHT
?

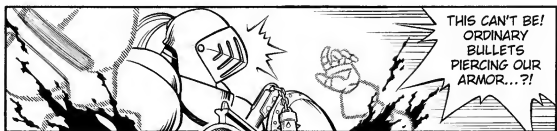
YOU
WON,
TOO,
WILL?



COLICE!

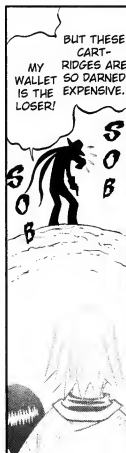


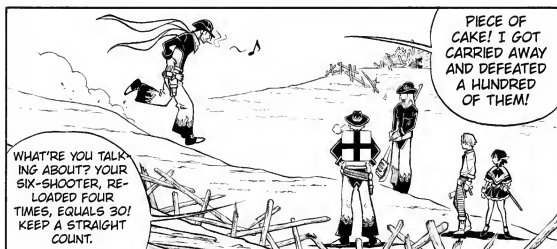




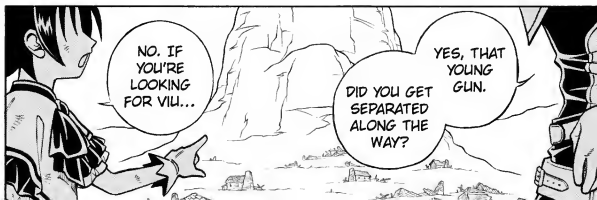
I CALL IT
"DRILL
LOCK."

IT'S
A CUSTOM-
MADE BULLET
WITH A SPIRAL
PATTERN EN-
GRAVED ON
HARDENED
STEEL.

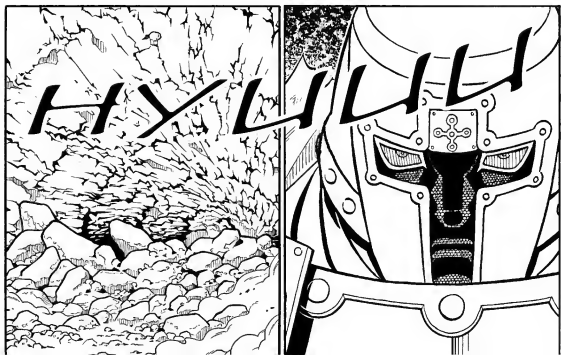
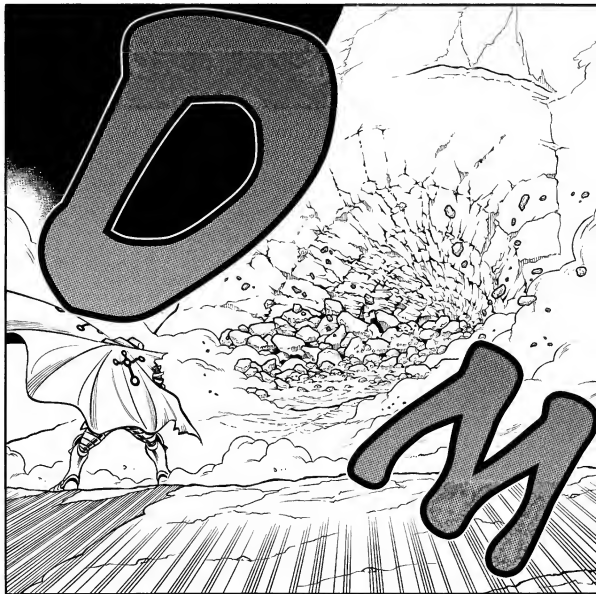


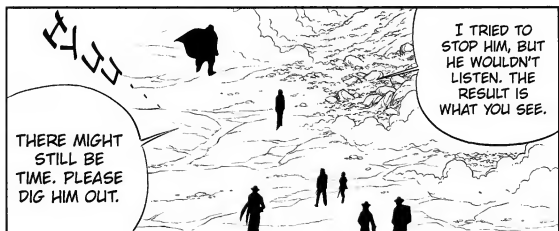
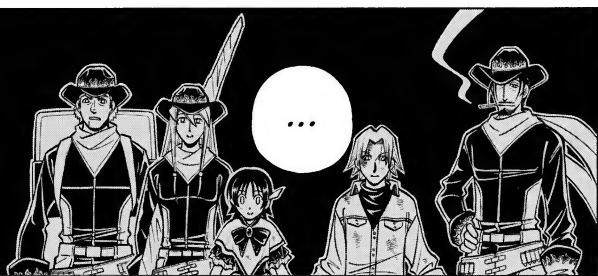


VIU BANNES!!











HEY VIU,
COME ON
OUT.

IF YOU
DON'T
HURRY,
THE SUN
WILL SET
AND YOUR
TIME WILL
BE UP!

AFTER ALL
THAT BIG TALK,
WHAT THE
HECK'S THE
MATTER WITH
YOU?!

YOU
LUNK-
HEAD!



AREN'T YOU
PEOPLE
HUMAN?!

W-
W-
WHAT?!

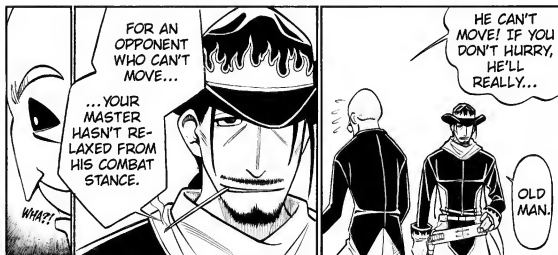
HE MIGHT
ALREADY
BE DEAD.

NAMU

CROAK
RIGHT
WHERE YOU
ARE!!

HE'S A
LUNKHEAD,
ALL RIGHT!

* "NAMU" IS THE BEGINNING OF A BUDDHIST



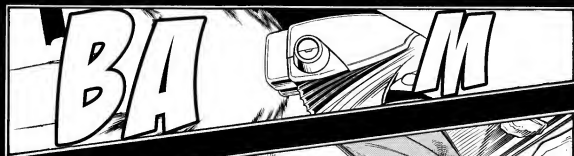
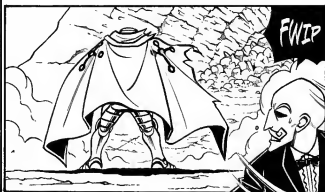
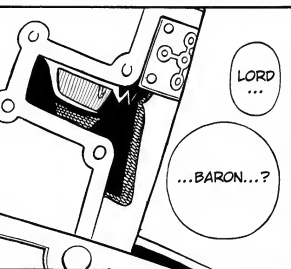
FOR AN
OPPONENT
WHO CAN'T
MOVE...

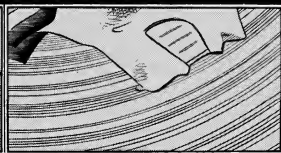
...YOUR
MASTER
HASN'T RE-
LAXED FROM
HIS COMBAT
STANCE.

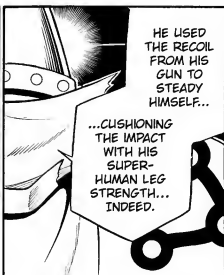
WHA?!

HE CAN'T
MOVE! IF YOU
DON'T HURRY,
HE'LL REALLY...

OLD
MAN.

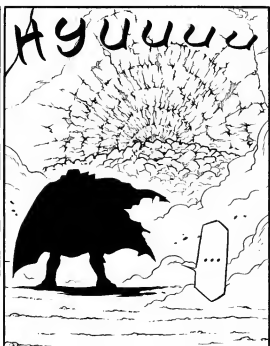




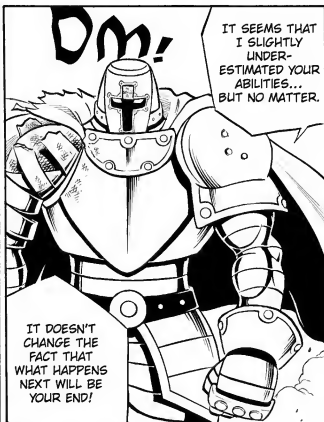


HE USED
THE RECOIL
FROM HIS
GUN TO
STEADY
HIMSELF...

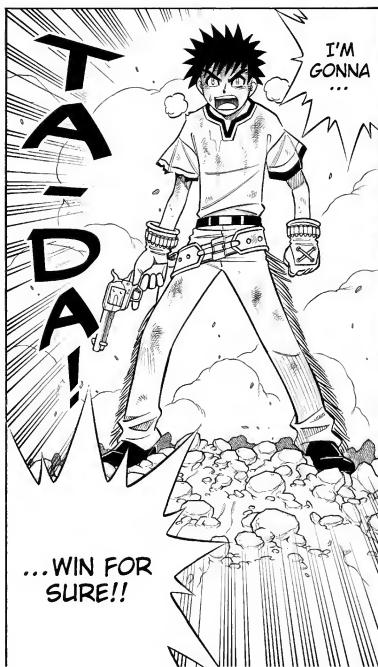
...CUSHIONING
THE IMPACT
WITH HIS
SUPER-
HUMAN LEG
STRENGTH...
INDEED.

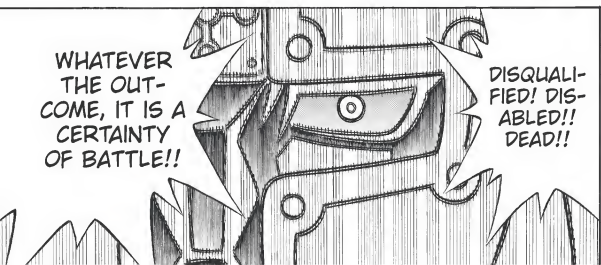
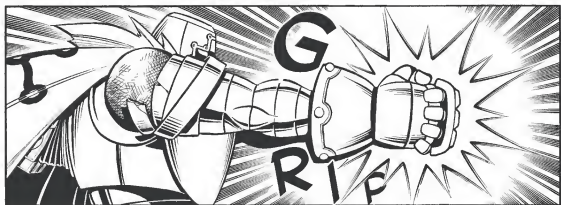






CHAPTER 27: FIGHTING HIGH



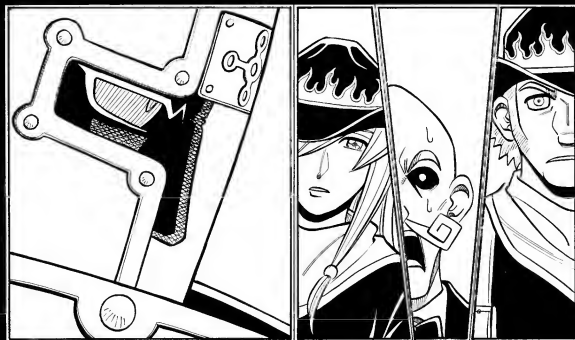


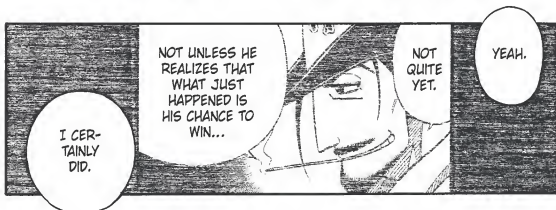
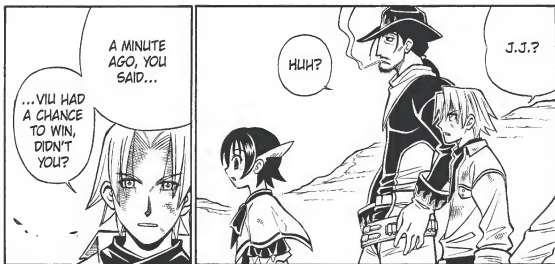
...WITH
YOUR
ENTIRE
BODY!!

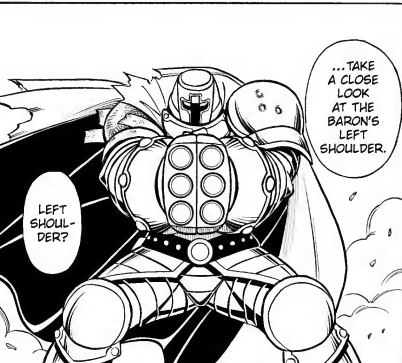
ACCEPT
DEFEAT...

CHAPTER 27:

FIGHTING HIGH







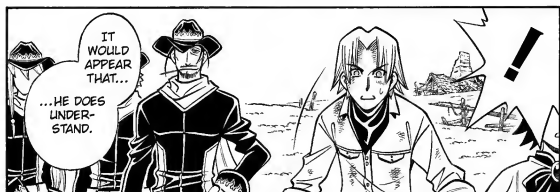
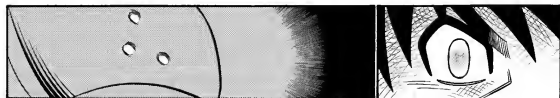
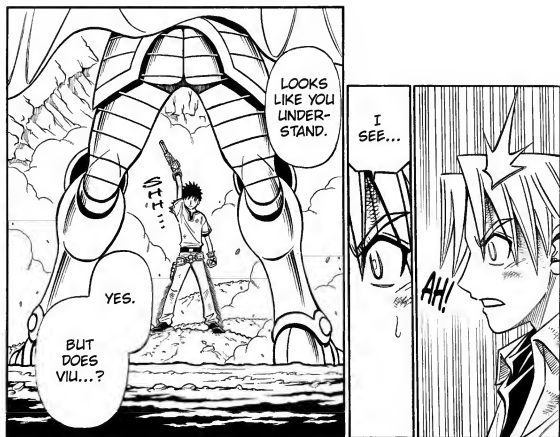
...TAKE
A CLOSE
LOOK
AT THE
BARON'S
LEFT
SHOULDER.



YEAH. THE
ONES THAT
YOUNG GUN
PUT THERE,
RIGHT?

BULLET
MARKS...!!





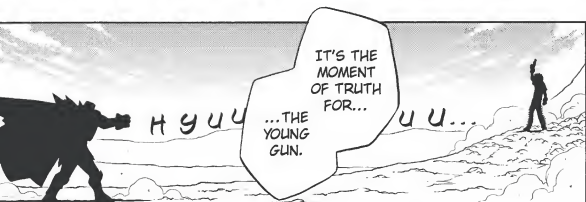
OKAY.
BUT SIMPLY
REALIZING
IT ISN'T
ENOUGH TO
WIN IN AN
ACTUAL
FIGHT.

DOES HE HAVE
ENOUGH SKILL
TO TURN THAT
CHANCE INTO
A WIN?



KNOWING HIM,
I DON'T THINK
HE UNDER-
STANDS WITH
HIS BRAIN,
THOUGH.

YES...

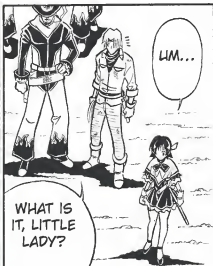


IT'S THE
MOMENT
OF TRUTH
FOR...

...THE
YOUNG
GUN.

...FOR
MORE
THAN ONE
MINUTE...

VILU'S BEEN
MAINTAINING
CONCENTRATION
ONE...



UM...

WHAT IS
IT, LITTLE
LADY?



...OF
INCREDIBLY
INTENSE
CONCENTRA-
TION.

RIGHT
NOW, VII
IS IN A
STATE...

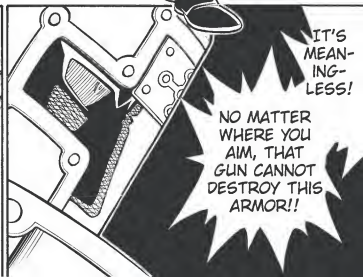


...WIN
FOR
SURE
!!

WIN!
I'M
GOING
TO...



HERE I
COME!!



IT'S
MEAN-
ING-
LESS!

NO MATTER
WHERE YOU
AIM, THAT
GUN CANNOT
DESTROY THIS
ARMOR!!

ONCE
ACTIVATED
NO ONE...

THERE IS
NO STOP
BUTTON
ON MY
DEADLY
GUN SACK!

CRACK

IT'S
IMPOS-
SIBLE
!!

...NO
ONE
CAN
STOP
IT!

BAM

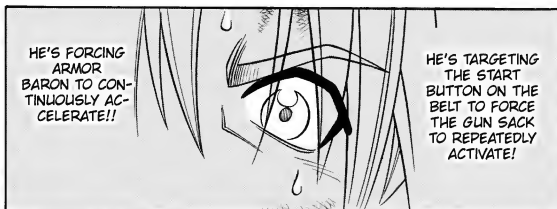
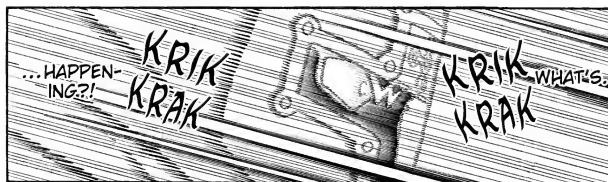
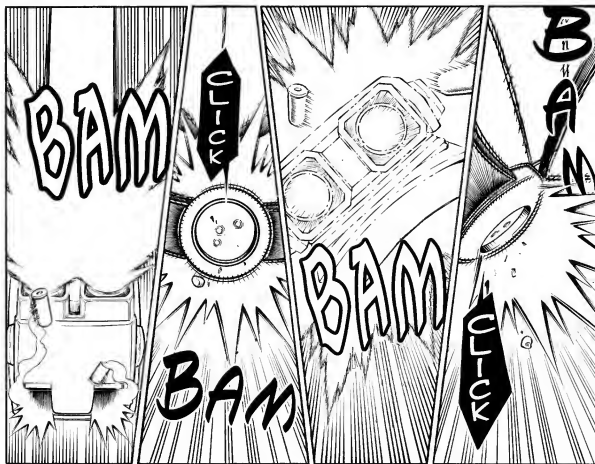
...AND
ONLY
CHANCE
TO WIN!!

THAT'S IT!
THAT
IS VIU'S
ONE...

IT'S
NO
USE!







ONCE THE
BULLETS
ATTAIN
MAXIMUM
POWER,
THEY WILL
RIP RIGHT
THROUGH
THE
START
BUTTON
AND THE
CENTER
OF ARMOR
BARON!!

AS THE
SPEEDING
TARGET
GETS
CLOSER
AND
CLOSER,
THE FORCE
OF THE
BULLETS
INEVITABLY
BECOMES
GREATER!!



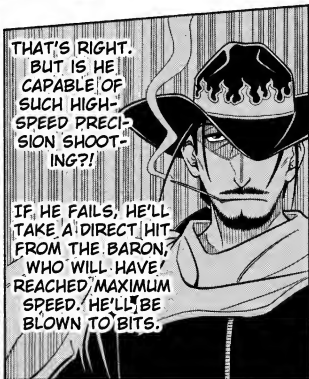
...VIU
CAN DO
IT! I'M
SURE OF
IT!!

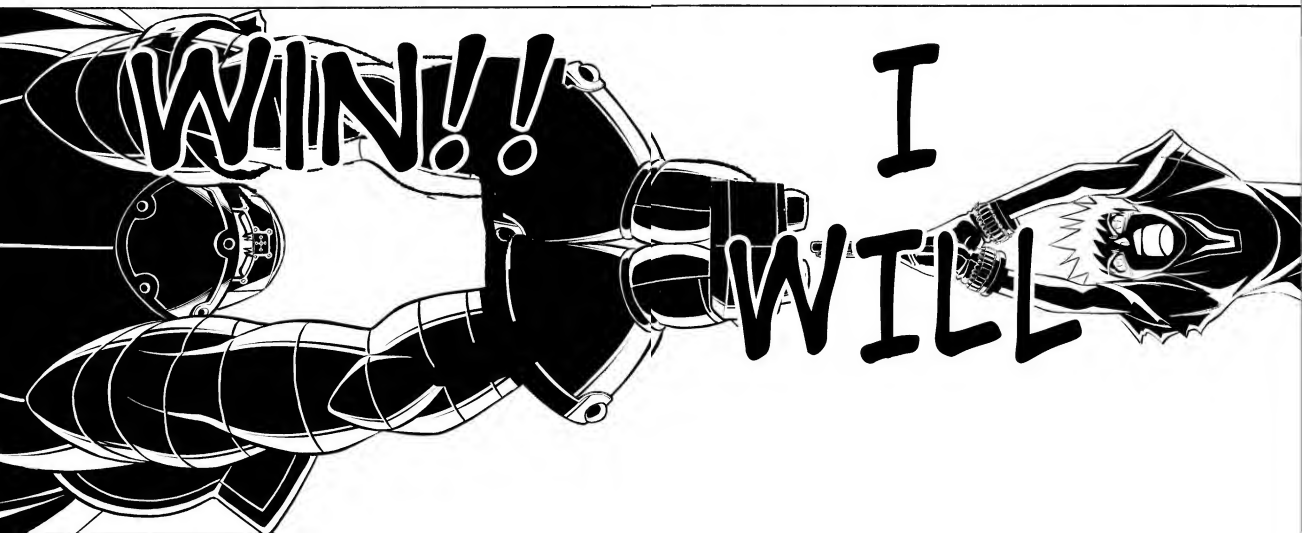
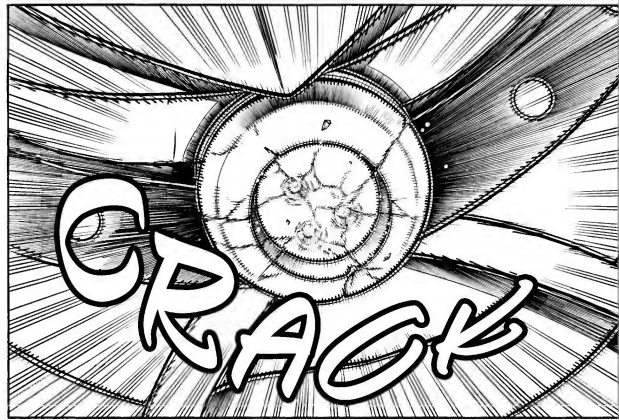
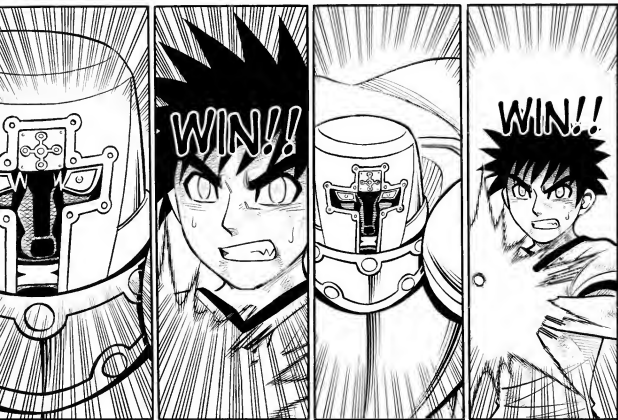
HE CAN DO IT!
WITH THE
CONCENTRA-
TION HE HAS
NOW...



THAT'S RIGHT.
BUT IS HE
CAPABLE OF
SUCH HIGH-
SPEED PRECI-
SION SHOOT-
ING?!

IF HE FAILS, HE'LL
TAKE A DIRECT HIT
FROM THE BARON,
WHO WILL HAVE
REACHED MAXIMUM
SPEED. HE'LL BE
BLOWN TO BITS.





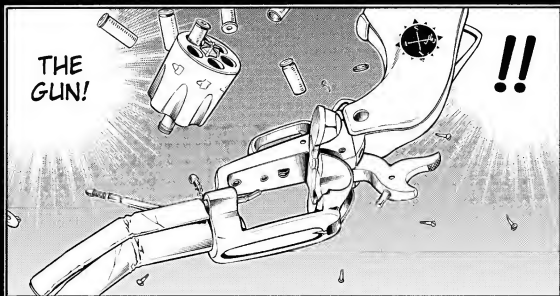


LAST

**FOR
SURE!**





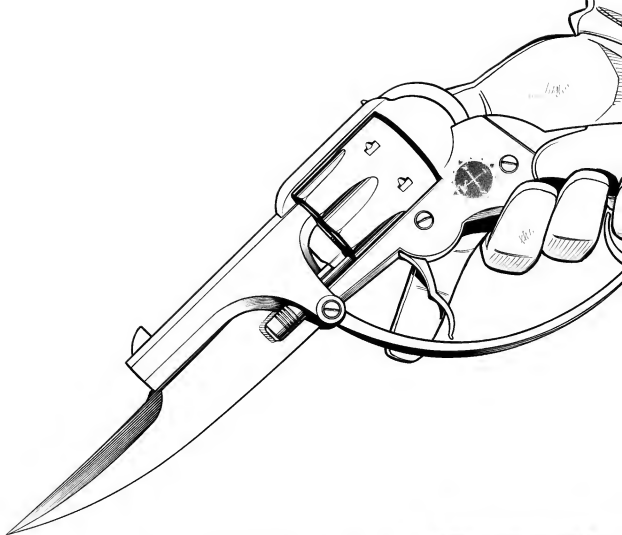


IF WE'RE LUCKY, LET'S MEET AGAIN...



MARCLUS'S GUN!!







BUT THE
BARON HIMSELF
INSISTED HE
WAS THE ONE
WHO LOST.

WELL,
ACTUALLY
IT WAS
ALMOST
EVEN.

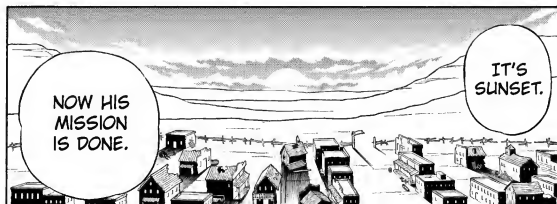


...HIS PRIDE
WOULDN'T
LET HIM
DO IT ANY
OTHER WAY.

AS ONE
WHO CALLS
HIMSELF
"ARMOR
BARON"...



...



NOW HIS
MISSION
IS DONE.

IT'S
SUNSET.

No.28(FINAL)



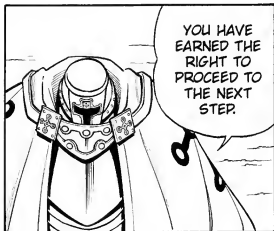
Waiting for you at the place we dreamt of.

SHUT UP!

EXCEPT FOR
VIU AND WILL,
EVERYONE
IS IN GREAT
SHAPE.



YOU HAVE
EARNED THE
RIGHT TO
PROCEED TO
THE NEXT
STEP.



WE'RE NOT
GOING FROM
HERE TO
GUN BLAZE
WEST?

HUH?



NEXT
STEP?

FOR THE
TWELVE
PEOPLE I
NAMED...

...CONGRAT-
ULATIONS.
YOU HAVE
QUALIFIED.





THEN LET'S
GET ON TO
THE NEXT
ONE RIGHT
NOW!

IS
THAT
RIGHT
?!

WHAP

YOU MUST
COMPLETE
SEVERAL
MISSIONS BEFORE
YOU CAN GET TO
GUN BLAZE WEST.

THAT'S
CORRECT.



...UNFORTU-
NATELY, MY
ROLE ENDS
HERE.

DM DM DM DM DM DM...

I'D VERY
MUCH LIKE
TO DO THAT,
BUT...

WHAT'S
THAT?

HEY,

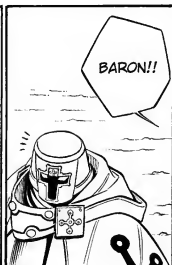
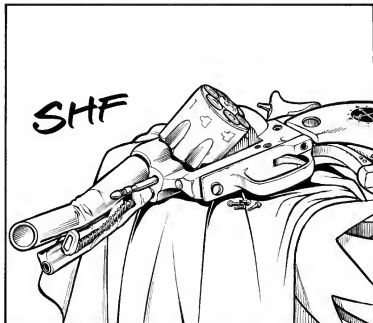


SOMETHING'S
THUNDERING
THIS WAY!!









SOMEONE WHO
WAS NOT ABLE
TO CLEAR THIS
VERY FIRST
MISSION HAS
NO POSSIBILITY
OF ADVANCING
ANY FURTHER.

HOWEVER, AS
YOU ADVANCE
TOWARD GUN
BLAZE WEST,
THE MISSIONS
WILL BECOME
INCREASINGLY
INTENSE.

...IF THAT
PERSON IS
STRONG.

I
SEE...

THEN,
I LEAVE
THE REST
TO YOU.

LORD
BARON!

EVERY-
THING IS
READY!

TMP
TMP
TMP

HUH?

UNDER-
STOOD.



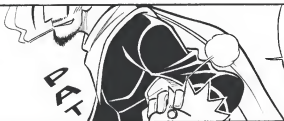
YOU
ARE THE
NEW
STRONG!!

FOLLOW
ME!

S
H
F



YOU'RE
UP
FRONT.



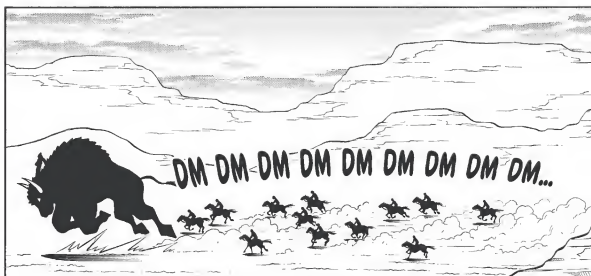
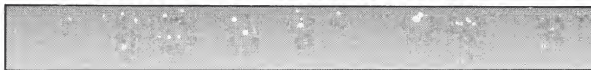
DON'T
DAWDLE,
YOUNG GUN.

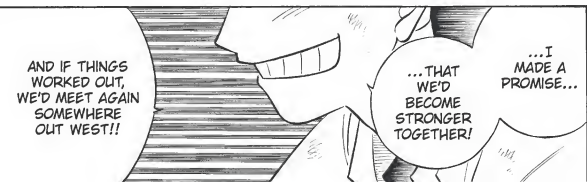
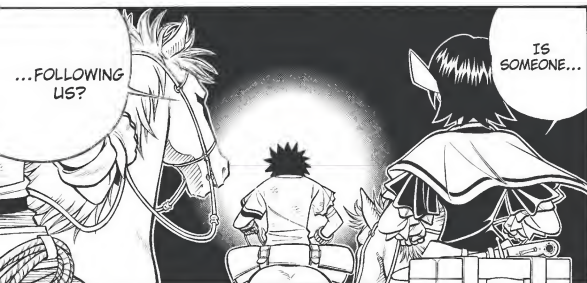
THAT MAKES
YOU NO. 1
NOW IN
THIS GROUP.



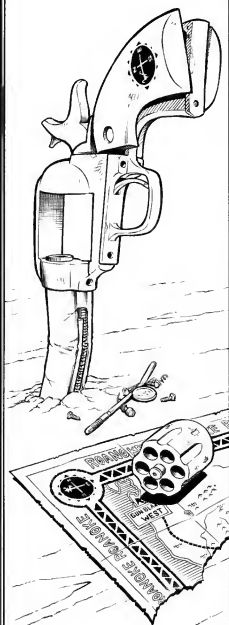
YOU WON
AGAINST
ARMOR
BARON.







"YES...THE PLACE
I'VE DREAMT OF."



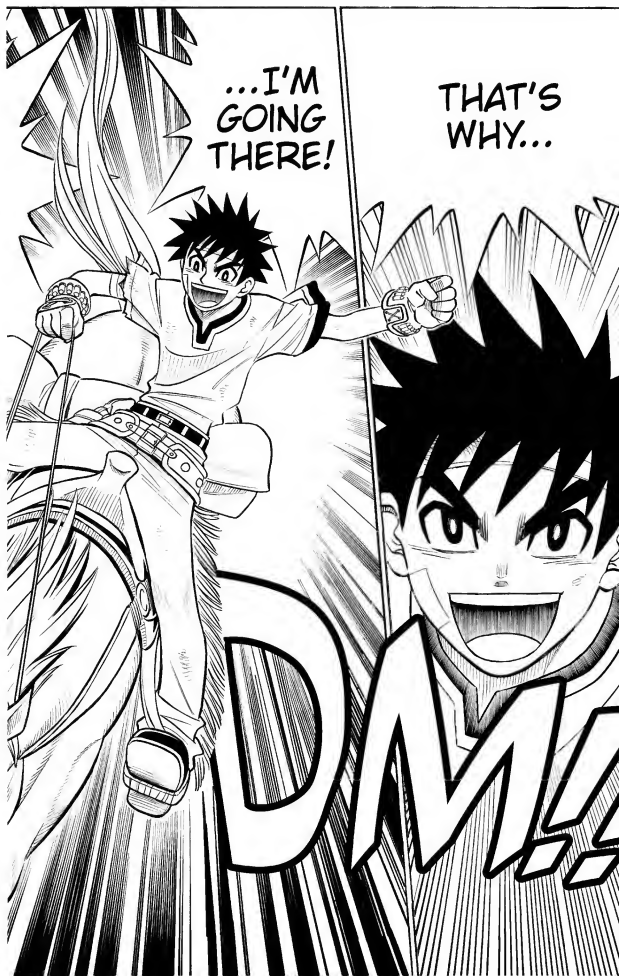
"GUN
BLAZE
WEST"

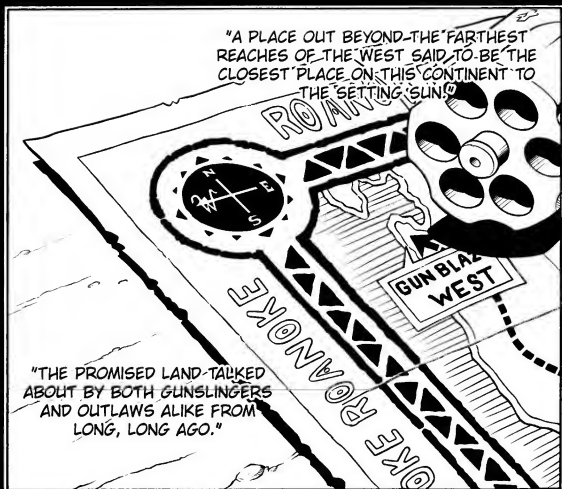
TO GUN
BLAZE
WEST!!



...I'M
GOING
THERE!

THAT'S
WHY...





"A PLACE OUT BEYOND THE FARTHEST REACHES OF THE WEST SAID TO BE THE CLOSEST PLACE ON THIS CONTINENT TO THE SETTING SUN."

"THE PROMISED LAND TALKED ABOUT BY BOTH GUNSLINGERS AND OUTLAWS ALIKE FROM LONG, LONG AGO."

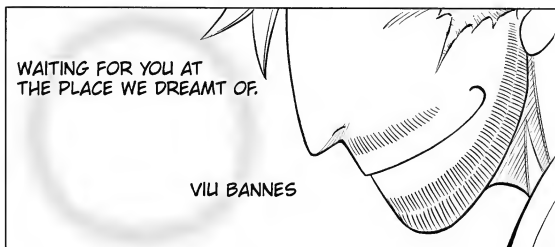


"ONLY THOSE WHO ARE CONFIDENT OF THEIR ABILITIES ARE ALLOWED TO STEP FOOT THERE."

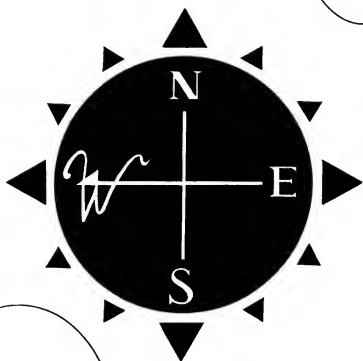
"AND ONCE EVERY TEN YEARS, THE STRONGEST OF THEM ALL IS BESTOWED THE FINEST GUN EVER MADE."

"THE NAME
OF THE PLACE IS..."





OKAY...



...FRIEND!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR READERSHIP TO THE VERY END. *GUN BLAZE WEST* THE SERIAL HAS NOW COME TO AN END.

THE "SOPHOMORE JINX" WAS AT WORK AS THIS STORY ENDED ITS SERIAL RUN AFTER JUST HALF A YEAR. IT FEELS AS THOUGH IT SWAPPED PLACES WITH MY FIRST WORK WHICH I BEGAN WITH "A GOAL OF MAKING IT TO 30 WEEKS." TRULY, AS THEY SAY, "GOOD LUCK AND BAD LUCK INTERWOVEN LIKE THE BRAIDS OF A ROPE." LIFE HAS ITS UPS AND DOWNS.

DURING ITS SERIAL RUN—ACTUALLY, BEFORE IT EVEN BEGAN—A LOT HAPPENED. DESPITE MY ATTEMPT TO CREATE SOMETHING THAT WOULD BE EVEN CLOSER TO WHAT A MANGA FOR YOUNG BOYS SHOULD BE, THE ROUGH TIMES WERE FOLLOWED BY TIMES THAT WERE EVEN ROUGHER THAN I COULD HAVE IMAGINED. I HAD MY SIGHTS SET ON MAKING IT IN TIME FOR THE SERIAL SELECTION MEETING THAT WAS SCHEDULED TO BE HELD DURING THE PERIOD WHICH I WANTED MY WORK TO RUN. THAT IS, UNTIL THE MAGAZINE MOVED UP THE MEETING BY ABOUT A MONTH. AT THE VERY LEAST, I THOUGHT I'D SUBMIT A TEST MANUSCRIPT. BUT THEY GAVE ME THE GO-AHEAD ON THE FIRST DRAFT OF THE FIRST CHAPTER WITH AN INCOMPLETE TITLE. I COULDN'T EVEN POLISH UP THE TITLE OR GET MY SCHEDULE ARRANGED THE WAY I WOULD HAVE LIKED, BEFORE PLUNGING INTO THE SERIAL RUN. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I EVER EXPERIENCED BECOMING UNABLE TO DRAW BECAUSE OF MY FRUSTRATION. AND THEN CAME THE DECISION TO END THE SERIAL...



EPILOGUE

NONETHELESS, THIS MISHAP WAS, AFTER ALL, MY FAULT. SHORTLY BEFORE THE DECISION WAS MADE TO END THE SERIAL RUN, A NOVELIST FRIEND TO WHOM I HAD COMPLAINED TOLD ME, "IT MIGHT'VE BEEN A TEST MANUSCRIPT, AND IT MIGHT'VE BEEN INCOMPLETE, BUT THE MOMENT YOU SHOWED SOMEONE A MANUSCRIPT WITH WHICH YOU WERE UNSATISFIED, IT BECOMES YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A PRO, WAKKII." THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD SAY. WHETHER THINGS TURN OUT WELL OR BADLY DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON WHAT I DO. I WILL ETCH THAT IN MY MIND SO THAT I WILL NEVER, EVER FORGET THAT.

TO ALL THE READERS WHO HAD HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR THIS STORY AND TO ALL THE READERS WHO ENJOYED IT, I WAS NOT EQUAL TO THE TASK. I SINCERELY APOLOGIZE.

I WILL START OVER ONCE MORE FROM SCRATCH.

NOBUHIRO WATSUKI

SEPTEMBER XX, 2001

AT THE PLACE
THEY DREAM
OF ... !!

